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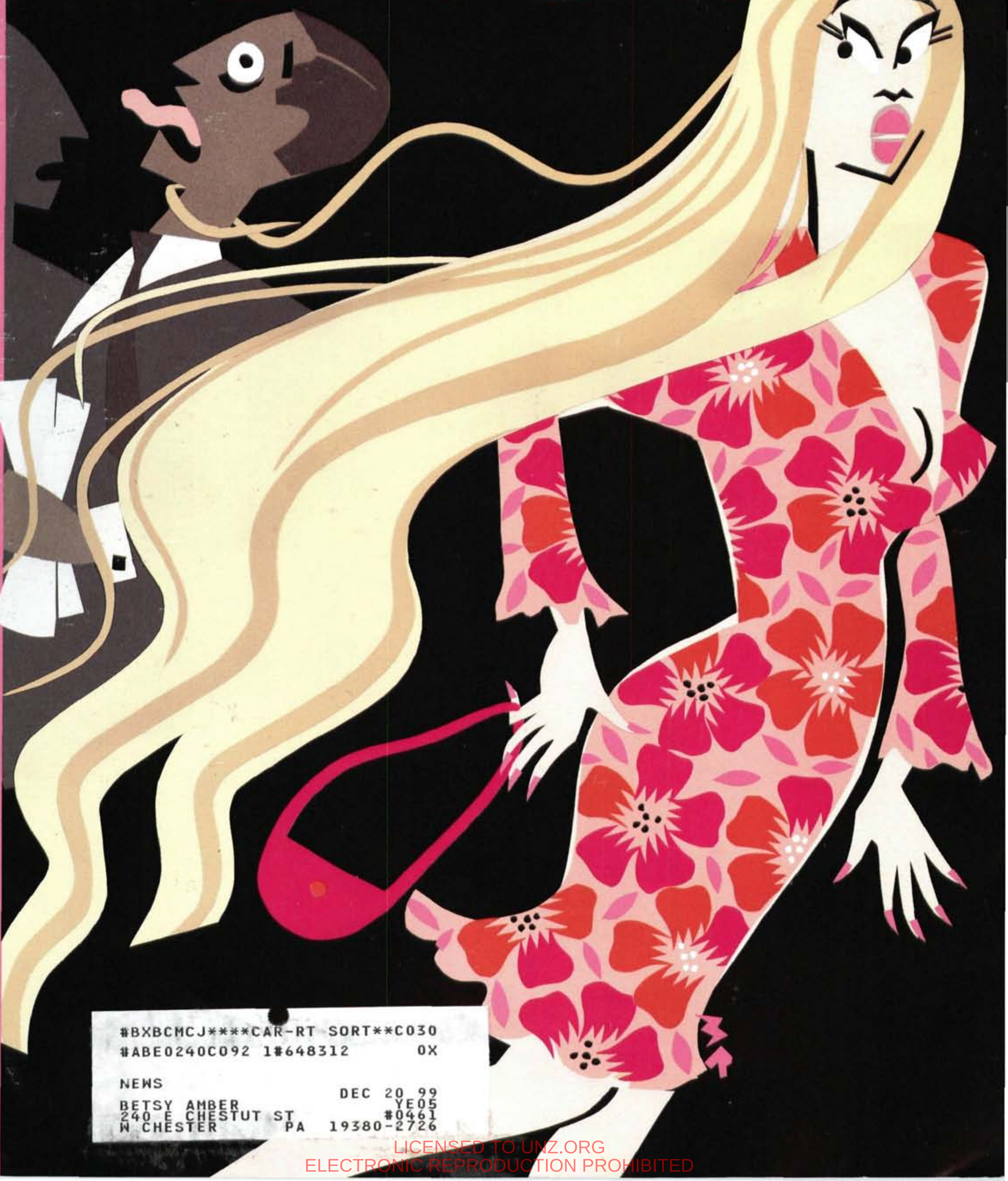
THE NEW YORKER

Mar. 22, 1999



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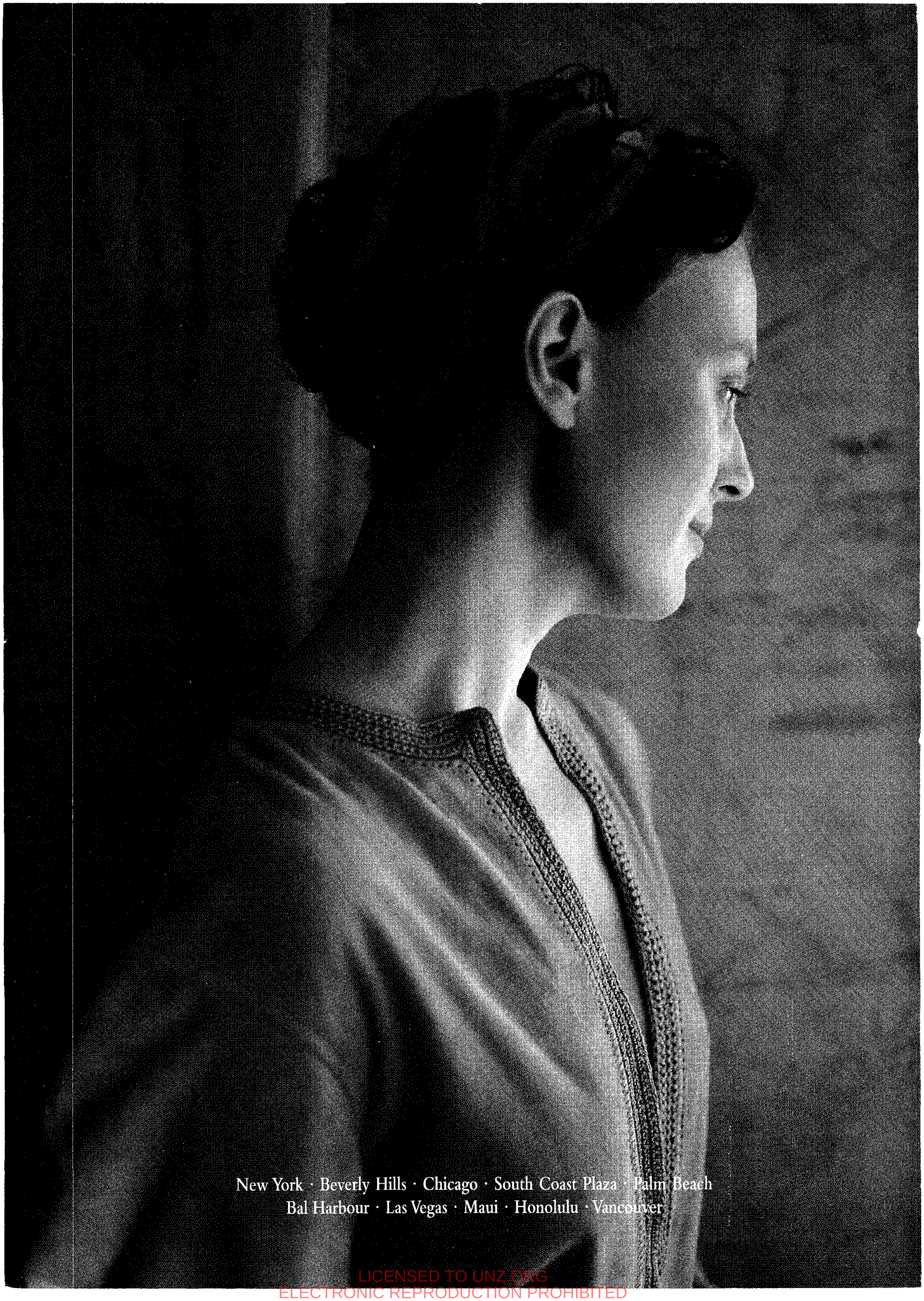
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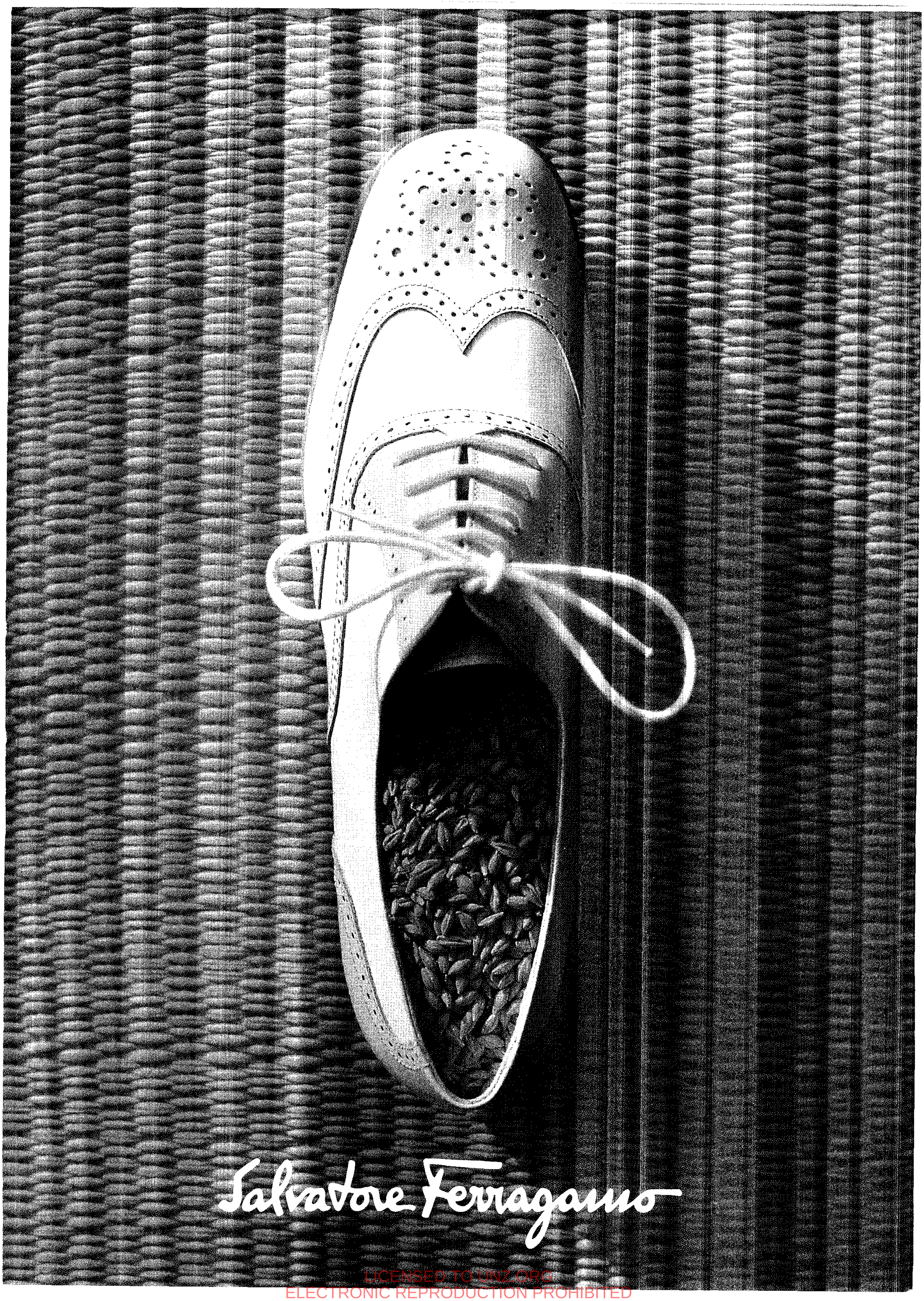
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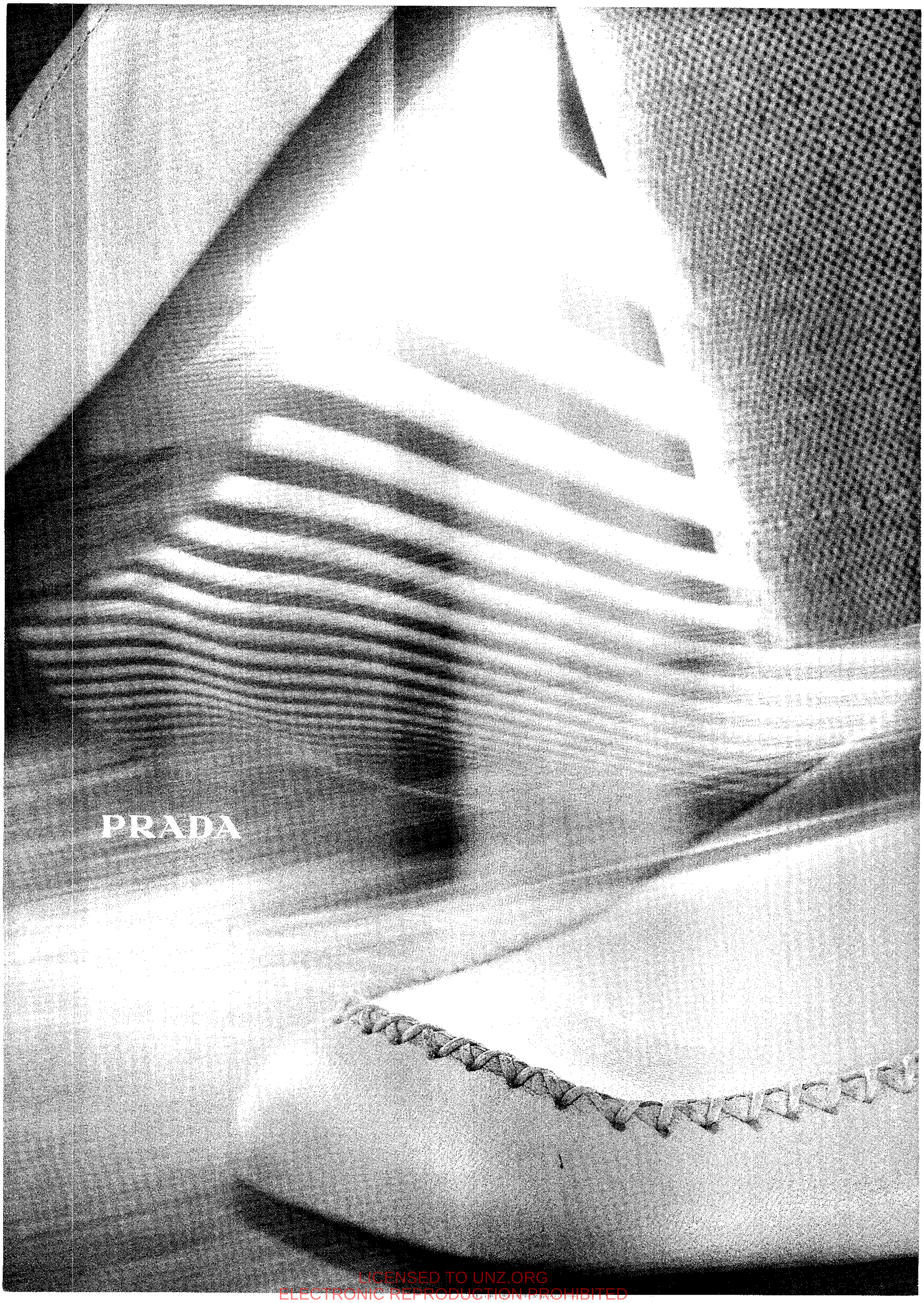
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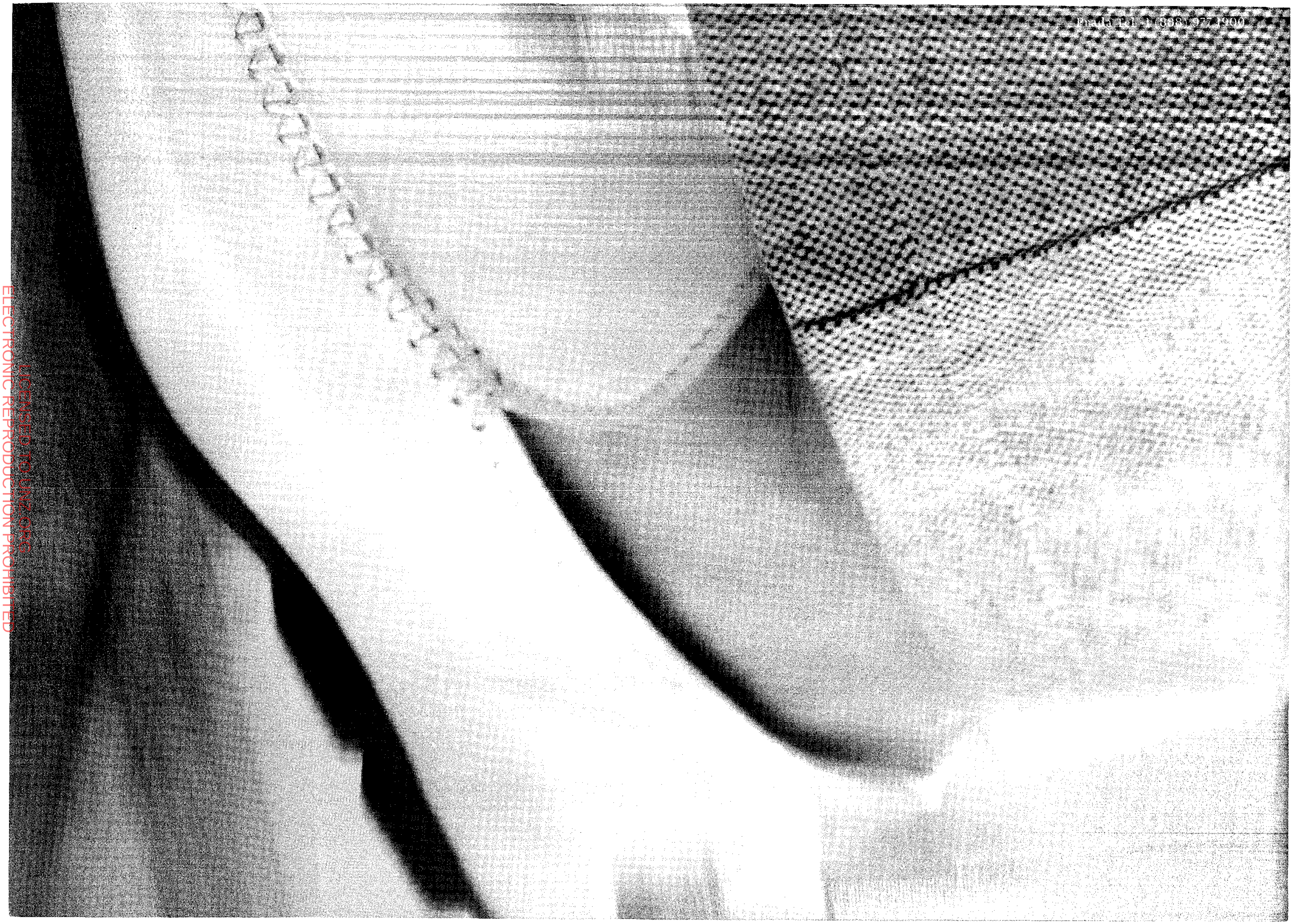
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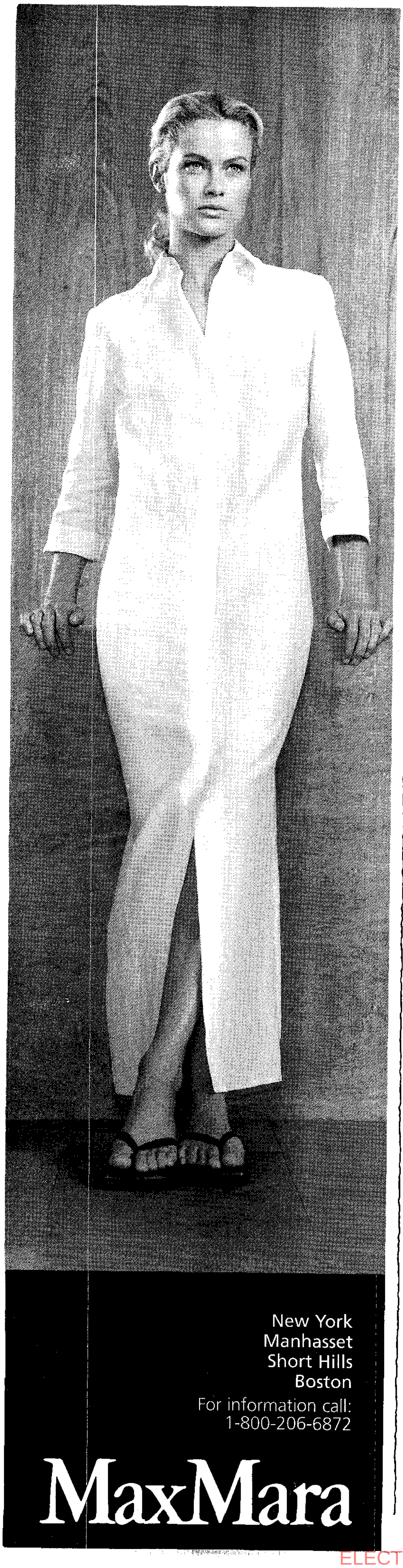

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THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly (except for six combined issues: Feb. 22 & Mar. 1, Apr. 26 & May 3, June 21 & 28, Aug. 23 & 30, Oct. 18 & 25, Dec. 27 & Jan. 3) by The Condé Nast Publications Inc., 20 W. 43rd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10036. Vol. LXXV, No. 4, March 22, 1999. Periodical postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Canadian Publication Mail Sales Product Agreement No. 190969. Canadian goods-and-services-tax registration number R123242885. Registered as a newspaper at the British Post Office. Subscription rates: In U.S. and possessions, one year, $42.00; two years, $72.00. In Canada, one year, $90.00 (includes GST and HST where applicable). In Germany, one year, DM290. Mail orders to: IP Internationale Presse, Distribution & Marketing GmbH, Waldstr. 70, D-63128 Dietzenbach, Germany. Other foreign subscriptions, one year, $112.00, payable in advance.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The New Yorker, Box 56447, Boulder, CO 80328-6447. PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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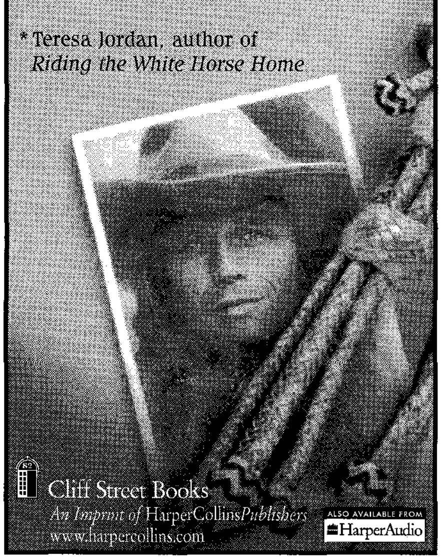

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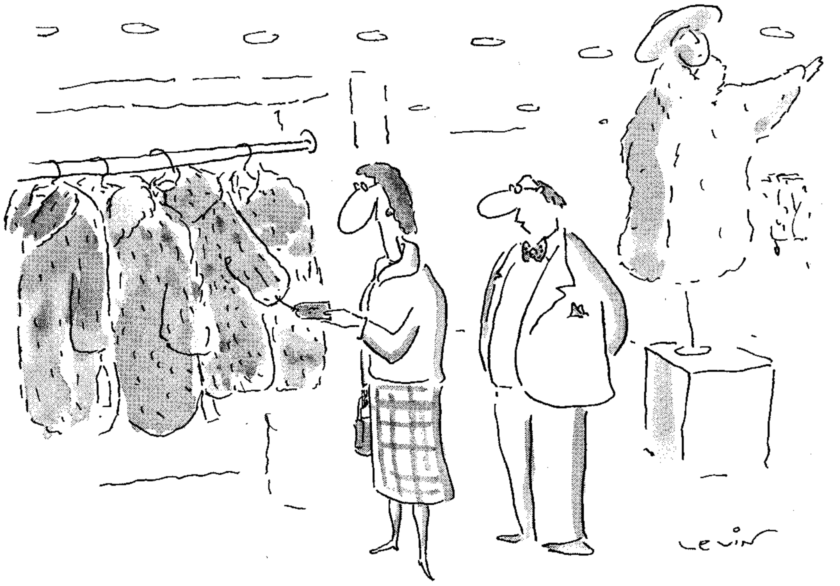
MALCOLM GLADWELL ("True Colors," p. 70) has just completed his first book, "The Tipping Point," which will be published in the fall.

SIMON SCHAMA (Style Note, p. 94) teaches history and art history at Columbia University. His books include "The Embarrassment of Riches" and the forthcoming "Rembrandt's Eyes." ♦



"Most of these pelts were suicides."

THE NEW YORKER, 20 WEST 43RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036. David Carey, publisher; Brenda Saget, associate publisher; David M. May, associate publisher/Europe; Richard Skeen, advertising director; Joyce Castleberry, New York manager; Cristina Vittoria, advertising manager; Susan Harrington, director of creative services; James Oates, director of marketing and planning; Theresa Gaffney, director of promotion. For advertising inquiries, please call Richard Skeen at (212) 536-5400. THE NEW YORKER is not responsible for the return or loss of submissions, or for any damage or other injury to unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. Any submission of a manuscript or artwork must be accompanied by a self-addressed envelope of appropriate size, bearing adequate return postage. The magazine does not consider unsolicited photographs or transparencies. © 1999 by The Condé Nast Publications Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of THE NEW YORKER. The periodical's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc., published through its division The Condé Nast Publications Inc. S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Steven T. Florio, president and C.E.O.; Charles H. Townsend, executive vice-president; Catherine Viscardi Johnston, executive vice-president; Eric C. Anderson, executive vice-president/chief financial officer.

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Kokeshi dolls
こけし

by Banana Yoshimoto

I'm looking for clothes that suit me to a T.
I can't find them no matter where I go.
Form, material, and color that can express all of my inner life.
Outfits that affirm I'm alive here now
Elude me though I combine all the images I know.
Even my parents can't find clothes for me in Japan today.

Like a limbless kokeshi doll,
Like a peeled hard-boiled egg,
Like a fetus waiting to be born,
I watch for something.
Like a just-hatched wet chick,
I'm transfixed by premonitions of future joys and sorrows.
I'm not yet able to express it in words.
Yet my heart beats; I'm alive.

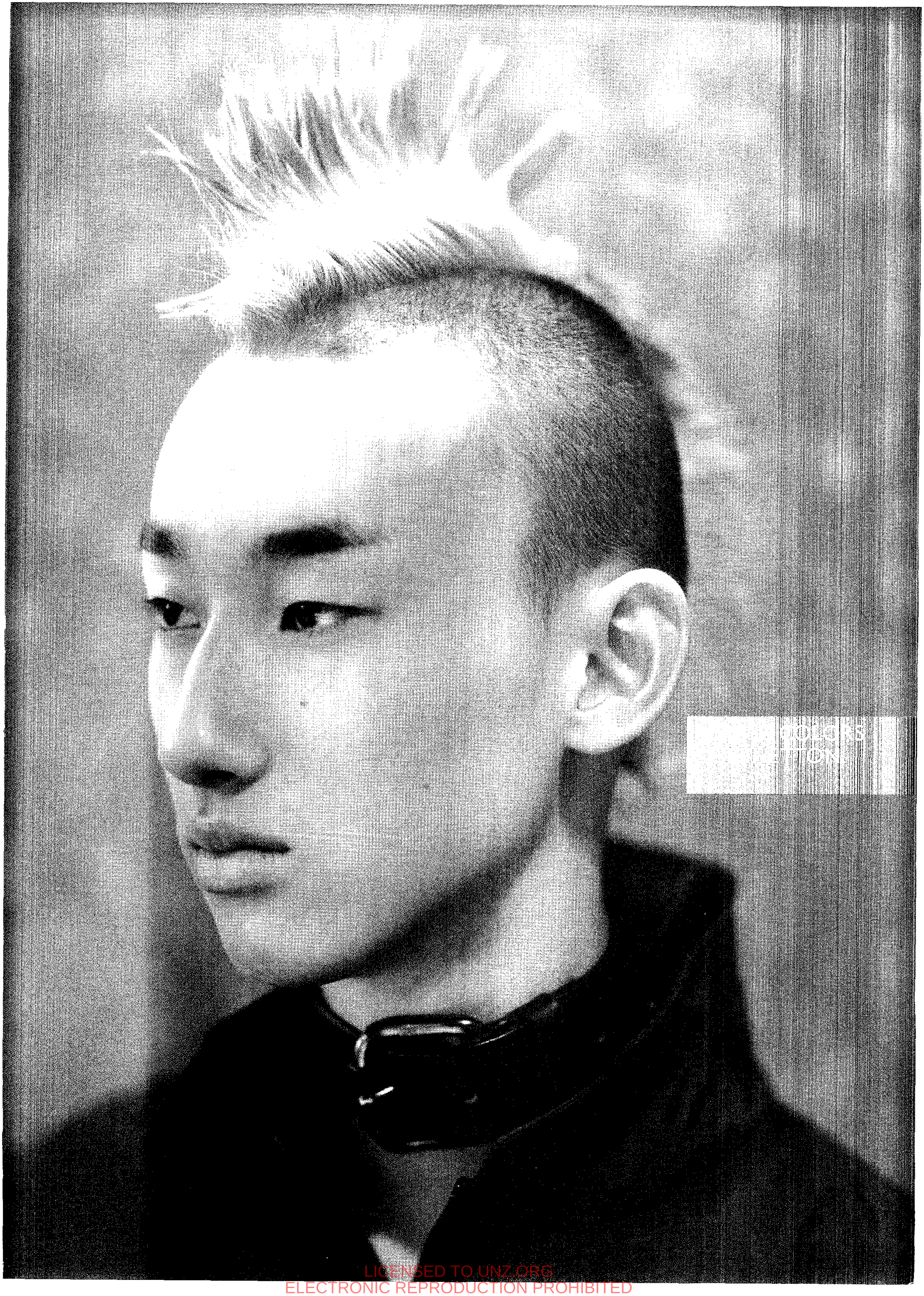
It makes little difference where you're born in this country.
You're pressed, rushed, squeezed into a mold.
Every rural district is mercilessly pierced by wide dreary roads and lined with tasteless megastores.
But the sight of lush green mountains brings tears to my eyes.
Toylike miniature waterfalls,
The gray of a sea as placid as a lake,
I love the delicate natural features unique to this country.

This is an age without surprises.
While parliament meets to deliberate how to save a tiny bird, children kill cats.
While villagers joyfully shoulder the portable shrine in the age-old festival,
someone poisons the communal meal.
Some people don't know what to believe in.

A brief digression: My friend's mother always keeps her nails manicured,
and her unused kitchen sparkles.
My friend eats only upscale-supermarket fare and fresh-baked French bread delivered by a boy.
Yet my friend is loved.
My mother is a farmer's daughter and her kitchen is soiled with grease.
She makes delicious white rice and tempura and pickles.
I'm also loved.
More than the downside of there being a difference,
In spite of the difference still loving and understanding each other, and growing up.
I've seen too many sorts of people in this kaleidoscopic age.
Now I can fearlessly meet people regardless of their looks or origins.
We trust our instincts and shed our prejudices.
Our spirits steadily wax more wonderful.

I like to eat, to loaf
To be healthy,
To be well thought of.
I like money.
I like to avert my eyes from unpleasant sights.
Yet I don't live for these.
To do what I want to do,
I can go without eating, endure a rough patch,
Suffer poor health,
Pocket an insult, live in poverty,
See much ugliness.

I don't dislike my still-juvenile self who possesses this much resolve.
To live is always to see both ways.
Which is a tolerable thing.
I don't want TV and newspapers to report only sad events.
We've only just embarked on the new journey.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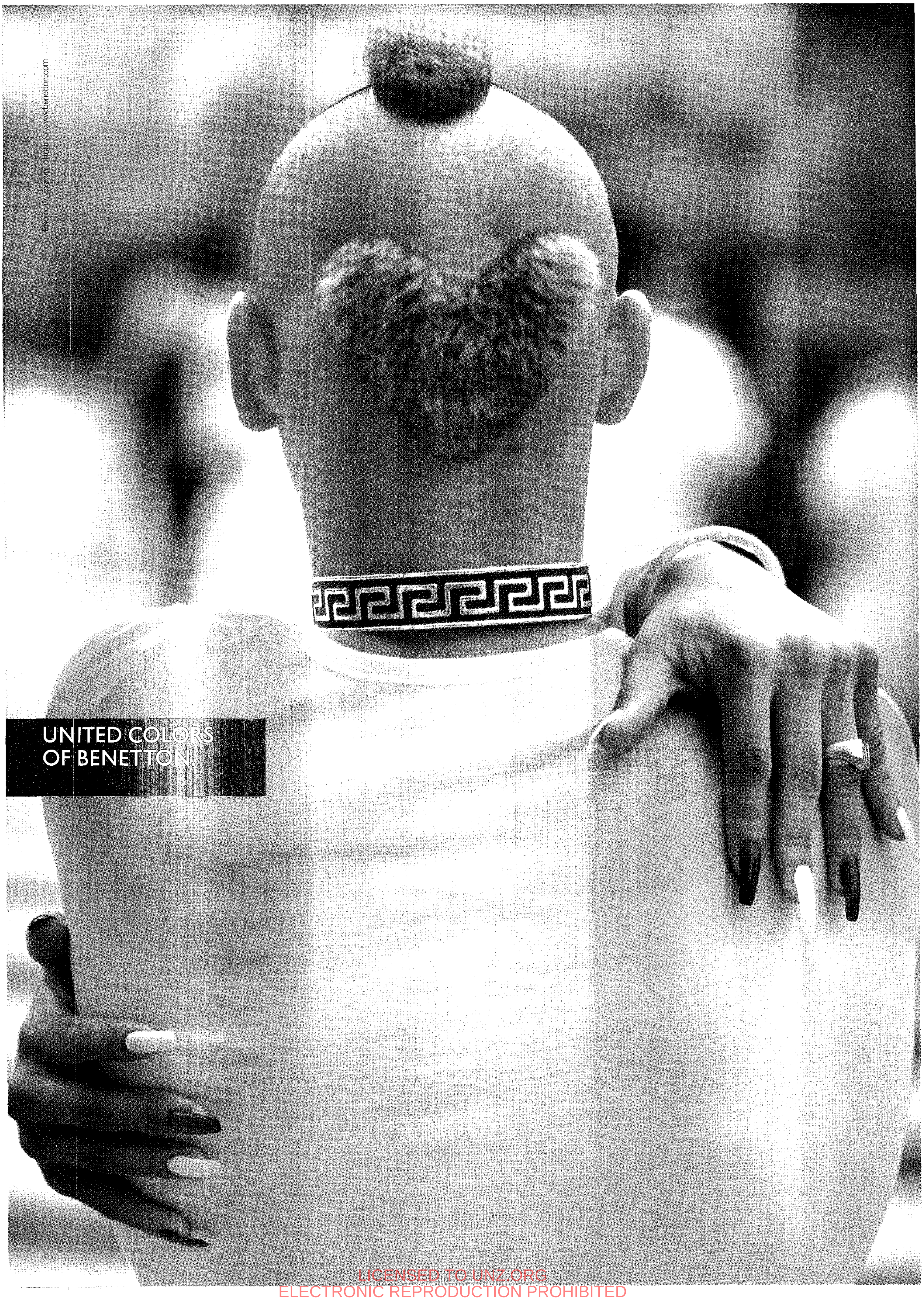
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THE MAIL

SECOND OPINIONS

In "Running from Ritalin" (A Critic at Large, February 15th) Malcolm Gladwell suggests that we should put to rest questions about the use of a drug to control attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. But controversy in the field is still building on how effective Ritalin is for the wide and variable range of children who can't sit still and whose attention wanders. Certainly the medical analogy that Gladwell adopts to make his case—high blood pressure—does not hold for Ritalin. Even when people's blood pressure is undeniably "above a certain point," medication is often not the first or only solution. Self-regulating remedies such as diet and exercise are typically the initial suggestions. Why not have a similar approach to attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder? In the long run, children could gain much from behavioral strategies; everyone feels stronger when his or her own actions help to bring about a healthier state.

ESTER SCHALER BUCHHOLZ, PH.D.
Director, Psychology of
Parenthood Masters Program
New York University
New York City

In my twenty years of practicing clinical psychotherapy, I have found that in many cases the symptoms of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder are a behavioral defense mechanism children use to repress overwhelming amounts of emotional pain accruing from ongoing parental abuse or neglect. The paradoxical moods of fidgety hyperactivity and daydreamy lethargy observed in these children serve the same function: distraction from unbearable levels of loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Ritalin dismantles these detrimental defense mechanisms, but it also further masks the underlying factors of parental neglect or abuse which first gave rise to them. Over time, these causative factors often require increasingly complex regimens of pharmaceuticals to control. Unless we act to repair these children's deeper damage, they are being primed for lifetime dependence on drugs both prescribed and illicit.

PETE WALKER, M.A., M.F.C.C.
Lafayette, Calif.

TALES OF THE TAPE

"He'd kill us if he got the chance," Gene Hackman heard the man saying in "The Conversation." "He'd kill *us* if he got the chance," the man turned out to be saying when the tape was closely scrutinized. The nuance turned out to be important. As one who has been criticizing Clinton from the left, I am well used to the clever tactic that makes me guilty by association with the extreme right. At the *Nation* staff meeting that was reported in The Talk of the Town (March 15th), I took along a tape recorder as a sort of bodyguard against this insinuation. Sure enough, I was accused at the meeting of carrying water for men like Congressman Bob Barr, of Georgia, who has unsavory associations with a white-supremacist group. I replied with sarcasm that of course I think he's a good guy. I agree with him in his opposition to roving wiretaps and I agree with him about impeachment, and that's it. On most other matters, he and the President have more in common with each other than either does with me. This appeared in *The New Yorker* as my conviction that Mr. Barr is in many ways a good guy. I expect to have this recycled against me for weeks to come. Since I gave *The New Yorker* the tapes, I know how Gene Hackman must have felt. Literal fact-checking of ironic speech is a tricky business, of course, but I still think that a point is a terrible thing to miss.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS
Washington, D.C.

•

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Janet Malcolm's
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is the "most trenchant statement yet of her great subject."
—N.Y. Times Book Review

She tells the story of a lawyer who, she believes, was wrongly convicted, disbarred, and imprisoned because her unfaltering sense of responsibility for the defense of her con-man client was interpreted as collaboration in his fraud.
Malcolm holds us fascinated with this portrait of a woman penalized because she was unable—in her insistent, obsessive, maddening honesty—to tell an acceptable story.

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—MARGARET TALBOT

"Beautifully written and tautly argued"—D.T. MAX
New York Observer

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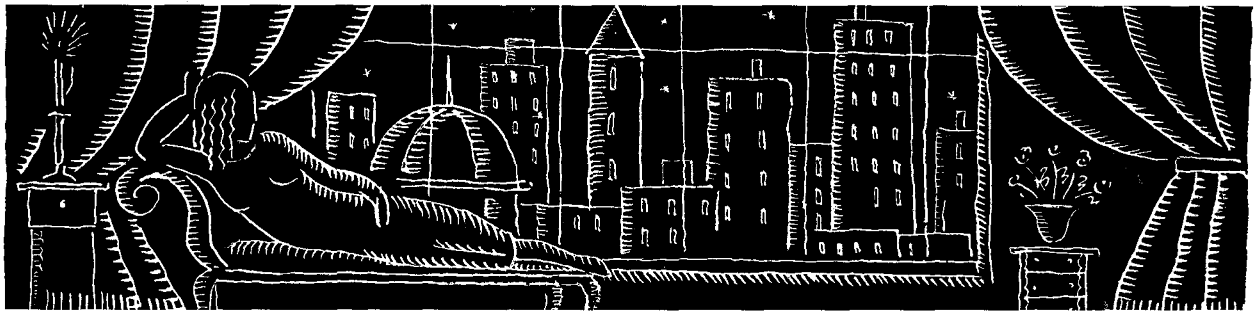

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Closer—Natasha Richardson leads the cast in a new play by Patrick Marber, which examines the tangled relationship of four friends. In previews. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Marcel Marceau—The master of mime returns to New York for a two-week engagement. Opens March 18 at 7 and runs through March 28. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448.)

The Pitchfork Disney—A pair of immature twins pushing thirty mix it up with two eccentric cabaret singers, in a dark comedy by Philip Ridley. Presented by the Blue Light Theatre Company. In previews. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 279-4200.)

Premium Bob—The comedy duo otherwise known as David Latham and Paul Boocock have moved uptown for a brief run of their latest show, "Manhunt." In previews. (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 216-9596.)

Red—In Chay Yew's latest drama, an American writer revisits her native China during the Cultural Revolution. In previews through March 21. Opens March 23 at 7:30. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Tongue of a Bird—A rescue pilot (Cherry Jones) searches the Adirondacks for a missing girl, in a drama by Ellen McLaughlin. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

The Turn of the Screw—Jeffrey Hatcher's adaptation of the Henry James novella. In previews. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

The 2.5 Minute Ride—In Lisa Kron's solo show about her family, she recalls a trip to Auschwitz with her father, a Holocaust survivor. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

Via Dolorosa—The playwright David Hare performs his new one-man play, inspired by a series of recent trips to Israel. Stephen Daldry is the director. Two previews on March 17. Opens March 18 at 6:45. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

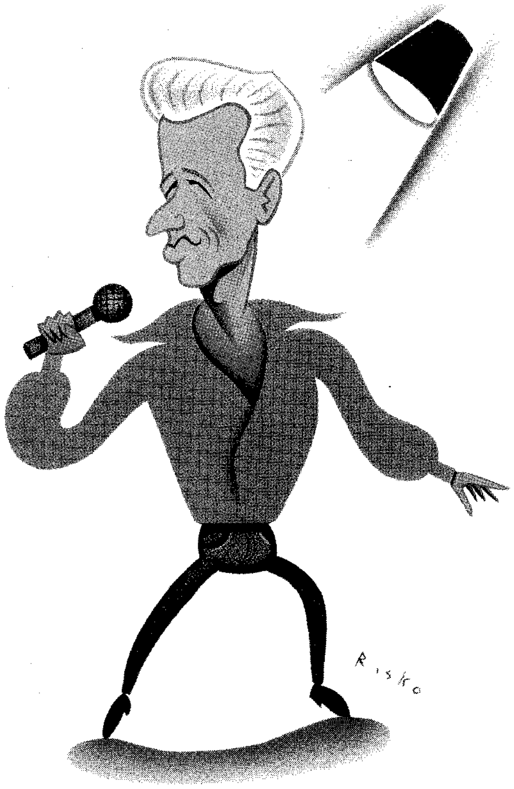
OPENED RECENTLY

Annie Get Your Gun—A terrific revival of Irving Berlin's solid-gold score. Peter Stone's cunningly updated book breathes new life into a show whose story has heretofore never lived up to its songs. It's played for romance and sass, which the vulnerable and charming Bernadette Peters and the hunky, easygoing Tom Wopat deliver in spades. This is the kind of rollicking, generous, good-humored entertainment that Broadway just doesn't turn out nowadays. With vivacious direction and choreography by Graciela Daniele and a witty Wild West set by Tony Walton. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Ashes to Ashes—Harold Pinter's masterly evocation of how torture corrodes the human spirit, directed by Karel Reisz and superbly acted by Lindsay Duncan and David Strathairn. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/22 & 3/1/99.) (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

Band in Berlin—A musical about the popular German sextet the Comedian Harmonists, three of whom were Jewish, who were banned by the Nazis on the ground that they were bad for German morale. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Beautiful Thing—Jonathan Harvey's 1993 drama, set in London, about two working-class boys who fall in love. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)



"James Naughton: Street of Dreams," at the Promenade.

Benten Kozo—Traditional Kabuki meets Jackie Chan in a delightful evening concocted by director Jim Simpson and his Bat Theatre Company. The company's hip updating of the nineteenth-century script and Moe Schell's clever costumes create an ironic, funny, energetic production. Runs in repertory with the company's revival of Mac Wellman's 1986 play "Cleveland." (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. 226-0051.)

Betty's Summer Vacation—A summer share turns bad, in a new comedy by Christopher Durang. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes March 28.)

Bright Lights Big City—At the beginning of this musical version of Jay McInerney's 1984 cri de coke, the Scottish songwriter Paul Scott Goodman, who wrote the show's music, lyrics, and book, walks onstage strumming his guitar and tells the audience that the novel's main character "reminded me of me." This is very bad news indeed. What we're then treated to is a nearsighted look back at a nearsighted decade, with music that sounds as though the eighties never happened and lyrics that sound as if civilization had never begun ("Oooh baby/You're so sweet/Can I pick you up/Can I lick you up/Can I stick you up"). Goodman has made the novel's hero more emotionally sympathetic, but, despite the fact that there is a fair amount of talent onstage, the show, which was directed by Michael Greif, is both slack and mindlessly energetic—a worst-case scenario of undisciplined freedom of expression. (3/15/99) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 780-9037.)

Captains Courageous: The Musical—Frederick Freyer and Patrick Cook's musical version of Kipling's book suffers not from a lack of conviction but from a lack of conception. Most of it takes place on a crowded fishing boat, and it feels like the crew is just trying to keep busy until shore leave, when they can get some real action. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes April 4.)

Cowboys & Indians—Francis Parkman's account of his Oregon Trail expedition, in 1846, inspired this comic reinterpretation by Richard Maxwell and Jim Strahs. (Soho Rep, 46 Walker St. 334-0962.)

Cruel and Barbarous Treatment—An evening of three short plays, based on two short stories by Mary McCarthy ("Cruel and Barbarous Treatment" and "The Man in the Brooks Brothers Suit") and one by John Cheever ("The Five-Forty-Eight"). In the Cheever, adapted and directed by Will Pomerantz, a familiar story about the downside of casual adultery is made powerfully new onstage. The two McCarthy stories, though, are trapped between forms; the cast is talented (especially J. Christopher O'Connor), but they're so concerned with telling the story that they don't exploit the possibilities of the stage. (The Salon, 432 E. 91st St. 279-4200.)

Death of a Salesman—A fiftieth-anniversary staging of Arthur Miller's play. (3/8/99) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

Electra—David Leveaux's powerful production of Sophocles' tragedy, starring Zoë Wanamaker. The play's bewildering brutality comes through as clearly as yesterday's headlines. (12/28/98 & 1/4/99) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. Closes March 21.)

ROBERT RISKO

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LE COLLEZIONI

EVERYBODY'S RUBY—Thulani Davis's new drama, set in Florida in 1952, centers on the murder of a prominent white doctor by a married black woman. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

FAR EAST—A drama by A. R. Gurney, set during the Korean War. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

FOOTLOOSE—A musical adaptation of the 1984 film. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

FOSSE—This steamy revue of works by the choreographer Bob Fosse doesn't reveal anything new about the man behind the dances, but it does remind us why we won't be forgetting him anytime soon. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

HALFWAY HOME—This New Group production of Diane Bank's play, about the fine lines between familial love, hate, hysteria, and hysterics, is set in a living room in Ankeny, Iowa, as a tornado is ripping just outside. The question is whether the maelstrom of accusations and guilt trips raging inside, at an all-female family reunion (do these ever *not* trigger emotional meldtowns?), isn't more threatening. Judy Frank, as the matriarch hostess who is hell-bent on holding things together—and passing out radish-rose appetizers—is the anchor who keeps a less weighty cast grounded. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

THE HAPPY PRINCE—A puppet show based on the Oscar Wilde story. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

HE WHO SAYS YES/HE WHO SAYS NO—The National Asian American Theatre Company's staging of rarely performed companion works by Bertolt Brecht. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. For information about tickets, call 718-623-1672. Closes March 27.)

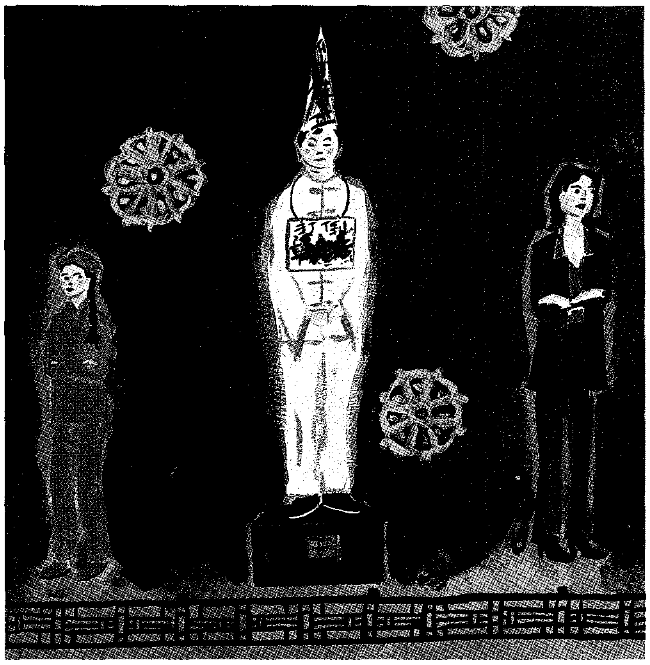
HOUSE/LIGHTS—The Wooster Group presents surprisingly compelling nonsense—blending a Gertrude Stein opera libretto (something about Faust) and a campy, pre-silicone bondage film ("Olga's House of Shame") into a fast-paced, high-low sideshow. Director Elizabeth LeCompte makes a convincing argument for fractured attention (from Cubism to MTV) as a valuable twentieth-century development, but she couldn't do it without Kate Valk, who gives entrancing Betty Boop line readings of the Steinian babble. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651. Closes March 28.)

JAMES NAUGHTON: STREET OF DREAMS—Between covers of romantic tunes by artists ranging from Billy Strayhorn to the King, Naughton inserts funny, standup-style anecdotes from his thirty-year stage career, and whether in monologue or in song he's a charmer. His voice is smoothly charged, and so is his band, which is led by the superb John Oddo on piano. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

JODIE'S BODY—A plump artist's model ruminates, in the nude, on the politics of beauty and the politics of her native South Africa. (ArcLight Theatre, 152 W. 71st St. 307-4100.)

KILLER JOE—In Tracy Letts's graphically violent dark comedy, an American family striving for a better life—in this case, a bunch of losers living in a trailer outside Dallas—hires a hit man to help things along. The terrific production is so vividly unself-conscious that you hardly feel assaulted at all. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

THE LION IN WINTER—The late James Goldman, who wrote the clumsy book to "Follies" with Stephen Sondheim and Hal Prince, could also write badly on his own. His 1966 version of the royal quarrels of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II, turned into a bourgeois family squabble, makes a solid high-camp vehicle for Stockard Channing and Laurence Fishburne. "How was your crossing. Did the Channel part for you?" Henry asks the Queen at her entrance. "It went flat when I told it to; I didn't think to ask for more. How dear of you to let me out of jail," she responds—the medieval version of meeting cute. Since the stakes and the idiom are not real, neither are the issues. A well-managed waste of time, with a good set by David Gallo and able direction by Michael Mayer, who needs to get down to more serious business. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)



"Red," by Chay Yew, at Manhattan Theatre Club.

MACBETH—Theatre for a New Audience's production of Shakespeare's tragedy. (American Place Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

THE MINEOLA TWINS—Paula Vogel's satire on women's roles—how they have changed and how they have stayed the same over the past forty years—predates her Pulitzer Prize-winning "How I Learned to Drive" and contains a lot less food for thought. Before the curtain goes up, Doris Day songs are played in the theatre and an enormous image of a torpedo bra stares out at the audience—and that's as subtle and fresh as this work gets. Under Joe Mantello's direction, Swoosie Kurtz, Mo Gaffney, and Mandy Siegfried (the latter two in gender-bending parts) bring what color they can to their rather schematic characters. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-9300.)

THE MOST FABULOUS STORY EVER TOLD—Paul Rudnick's new version of a very old tale. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

NIGHT MUST FALL—Maybe Matthew Broderick is just too darned cute to play a psychopath, but the main problem with this National Actors Theatre production of Emlyn Williams's 1935 thriller is that the play was probably never that thrilling to begin with, and it certainly isn't thrilling in 1999. (Big house, rich old lady in a wheelchair, charming stranger? *Please.*) Whoever's in charge of selecting the N.A.T.'s material owes the talented cast an apology and the audience a sincere promise to think twice before exhuming another dead play. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

NOT ABOUT NIGHTINGALES—Tennessee Williams's recently rediscovered early play is directed by Trevor Nunn. (3/8/99) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

PARADISE HOTEL—A look into the nightmarish yet often hilarious workings of the human subconscious is almost always what you get with a Richard Foreman play (no complaints there), and in this case his concerns are particularly libidinal. A group of unfulfilled travellers searching for sexual nirvana end up finding nothing even remotely like it. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

THE SEAGULL—Erika Warmbrunn's new translation of Chekhov's 1895 play meshes well with the energy, wit, and honest emotion induced by the director, David Herskovits, who gets stronger in his every outing. Unfortunately, some significant miscasting makes the production less powerful than it should be. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 358-3657. Closes March 20.)

THE SEAGULL—The Pearl Theatre Company's version. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes March 28.)

SNAKEBIT—Actor turned playwright David Marshall Grant's drama about three friends in a state of flux. Jace Alexander directed. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

THIS IS OUR YOUTH—While Kenneth Lonergan's highly praised comedy about postadolescent heartbreak shows real theatrical promise, it is good on surface behavior but not on subtext—everything that is psychologically important happens offstage. (Douglas Fairbanks, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

WIT—Right up to the last second, this first play by Margaret Edson, about the life and death (from ovarian cancer) of a John Donne scholar (Kathleen Chalfant, in an excruciating, powerful performance), has riches of acting, writing, and stagecraft. (1/18/99) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE BROWN—A nothing burger for audiences of all ages. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

ART: Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **THE MYSTERY OF IRMA VEP:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SIDE MAN:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **THE SOUND OF MUSIC:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE:** HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. . . . **TITANIC:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. (Closes March 28.) . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

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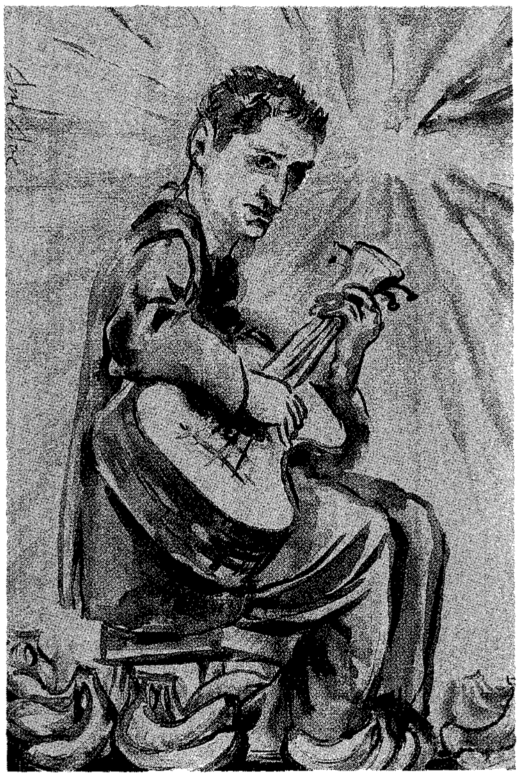
DANCE

Jazzdance by Danny Buraczeski—The eleven-member company presents four works, including "Scene Unseen," set to a suite of songs by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. March 16 at 7, March 17-19 at 8, March 20 at 2 and 8, and March 21 at 2 and 7:30.)

Carnival—March 16-17 at 8: **Maura Nguyen Donohue** in "SKINing the surFACE." Through March 26. . . . ¶ March 18-19 at 8: **James Cunningham and Jane Comfort** in "Together Again." Through March 28. . . . ¶ March 20 at 8 and March 21 at 3: **Keely Garfield** in "Minor Repairs Necessary." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. The festival continues through March 28.)



Vinicius Cantuária, at the Knitting Factory.

92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Project—The uptown dance series continues with choreography by onetime Merce Cunningham dancer Ellen Cornfield. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 415-5553. March 16-18 and March 20 at 8 and March 21 at 5.)

"Smash Through to Sunlight"—The choreographer Ben Munisteri presents two premières and a reprise of "Stolen Fire (July 2020)." (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. March 18-21 at 8:30.)

"Spooky Action at a Distance"—The choreographer Dean Moss takes his inspiration from the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers film "Swing Time," in an exploration of connectedness that includes tangents on physics, minstrel shows, and doppelgängers. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. March 17-20 at 8.)

"Mujeres y Hombres"—Carlota Santana and her company, Flamenco Vivo, appear in works by flamenco choreographers Antonio Hidalgo and Cara Mora. (New Victory Theatre, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. March 17 and March 19 at 7, March 20 at 2 and 7, and March 21 at noon and 5.)

"The Ties That Bind"—The Creative Outlet Dance Theatre of Brooklyn ventures into Manhattan to perform works by company founder Jamel Gaines and by guest choreographers Krystal Hall-Glass and Obediah Wright. (Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. 650-7148. March 19 at 7, March 20 at 8, and March 21 at 3.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

The Corrs—The family Corr (sisters Andrea, Sharon, Caroline, and older brother Jim), from Dundalk, Ireland, makes shiny Celtic pop. After the BBC televised their Royal Albert Hall concert last St. Patrick's Day, their album "Talk on Corners" enjoyed a healthy run up the British charts and set tongues wagging about "the next U2." The disk was released here last month, and it hasn't yet made a dent on the American charts, but it deserves to. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. March 17 at 8.)

"Jazz: The 20th Century Musical Miracle"—What happens when you bring together four of the most accomplished composer-arrangers in jazz—Manny Albam, Slide Hampton, Jim McNeely, and Muhal Richard Abrams—and ask them to contribute individual sections for an epic that aims to retell the history of the art form? This Carnegie Hall Jazz Band project has as much chance to exhibit genius as it does mediocrity, but it's nothing if not ambitious. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 18 at 8.)

Jeff Beck—The guitar hero's guitar hero. (Roseland. March 19 at 8.)

Frank Loesser Marathon—Mary Cleere Haran, Kitty Carlisle Hart, Betty Comden, James Naughton, and more than a hundred other singers and actors pay tribute to the Broadway composer. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. No tickets necessary. March 20 from 11 to 11.)

Charanga Rubalcaba and Típica 73—Led by pianist Guillermo Rubalcaba, Charanga Rubalcaba uses its string section and its flutist, Jacinto Joaquín Olivero, to preserve the *danzon*, a traditional Cuban dance that traces its roots back to the drawing rooms of eighteenth-century France. With the seminal New York City salsa band Típica 73, together for their first show in nearly two decades. (Lehman College Concert Hall, the Bronx. 718-960-8833. March 20 at 8.)

Steve Earle and the Del McCoury Band—Country-rock rebel Earle turns back toward straight country music with his latest disk, "The Mountain." But the sound of his new work doesn't come out of Nashville; it's from Rosine, Kentucky, the birthplace of Bill Monroe, the father of bluegrass. Backed by the Del McCoury Band, whose leader apprenticed with Monroe in the sixties, Earle couldn't be in better company. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. March 20 at 8:30.)

Jazz at the Flea—March 22 at 8: Soprano saxophonist Philip Johnston plays duos. . . . ¶ March 23 at 8: Former Microscopic Septet pianist Joel Forrester goes solo. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-0051.)

Byron Stripling and George Wein—The trumpeter and the pianist headline an evening of New Orleans jazz organized by the Sidney Bechet Society. (Theatre at Greenwich Village Center, 219 Sullivan St. For information, call 516-627-4468. March 22 at 6 and 8:30.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Blarney Star, 43 Murray St. (732-2873)—March 17: A St. Patrick's Day celebration with accordionist **Denis Galvin** and All-Ireland fiddler **Brian Conway** and harmonica player **Don Meade.**

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—March 17: **Great Big Sea**—four guys from Newfoundland and their mandolin, accordion, bass, and bodhran (a goatskin drum)—writes and performs revved-up pop and chanteys. March 20: **Buster Poindexter** and his **Spanish Rocketship Band.**

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—March 18-19: The New Orleans trio **Better Than Ezra** became famous with plodding power chords, but its third album, "How Does Your Garden Grow?," reaches for sonic maturity by embracing drum loops and more fanciful keyboard effects. The song "One More Murder" landed on the soundtrack of last summer's "X-Files" movie, which is a good indication of just how little they've grown. March 20: **D Generation,** the wandering minstrels of St. Marks Place, treat their home-town fans to an evening of hard-rocking tunes. With the **Toilet Boys.**

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—March 20: Former Howlin' Wolf guitarist **Hubert Sumlin.**

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—March 19: The members of **Israel Vibration** first met as children in Jamaica's Mon Rehabilitation Center, where they were being treated for polio. They became friends through their shared love of roots reggae, and started a band. More than two decades later, they have become one of the more inspiring reggae acts around, not because they take the stage supported by crutches (which they do) but because they harmonize about Rastafarianism and social ills with overwhelming emotion. March 20-21: **Sleater-Kinney,** the critically acclaimed all-female, power-punk trio out of Olympia, Washington. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—March 18: **D.J. Logic,** a turntable technician who recently backed Medeski, Martin & Wood (see Tonic in Jazz and Standards), mixes it up with **Sexmob,** a quartet with madcap jazz leanings, led by slide trumpeter Steven Bernstein. March 19: A feisty post-punk feminist whose work is a hybrid of Liz Phair and Gertrude Stein, **Jill Sobule** had a minor hit, "I Kissed a Girl," in 1995. Also on March 19: **Giant Fingers** fills the room with hypnotic grooves.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—March 17: **Barbarito Torres,** a master of the *laoud,* a Cuban twelve-stringed lutelike instrument, appeared on last year's "Buena Vista Social Club" album. March 22: **Típica 73** (see Concerts). Dining.

Tonic, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—March 21: Sonic Youth guitarist **Thurston Moore** goes acoustic.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—March 18: Ska-pop with the **Dance Hall Crashers.** March 19: The Windy City outfit **Mighty Blue Kings** specializes in hard-swinging jump blues and favors songs by Louis Jordan, Jimmie Lunceford, and their talented leader, Ross Bon. March 20: The **Brooklyn Funk Essentials,** who recently added Turkish influences to their urban grooves. March 23: A nonpareil evening of rap with **Prince Paul, Stetsasonic, Big Daddy Kane,** and **Chubb Rock.**

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—March 17: Under the leadership of the tradition-rattling Celtic-music gadfly Larry Kirwan, the raucously rocking **Black 47** has become an American version of the Pogues—only with a wider musical point of view and fewer barroom brawls. Their new album, "Live in New York City," was recorded here last St. Patrick's Day. If you, or your liver, can't make the show this Wednesday night, the album is a mighty fine substitute.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—March 18-20: **Stanley Jordan.** With the cry "Look Ma, four hands!," Jordan's ability to wrest symphonic landscapes from his guitar continues to astound. March 23: The newly formed **Mingus Orchestra** (in on Tuesdays in March) now augments the well-entrenched Mingus Big Band (Thursdays at Fez) and

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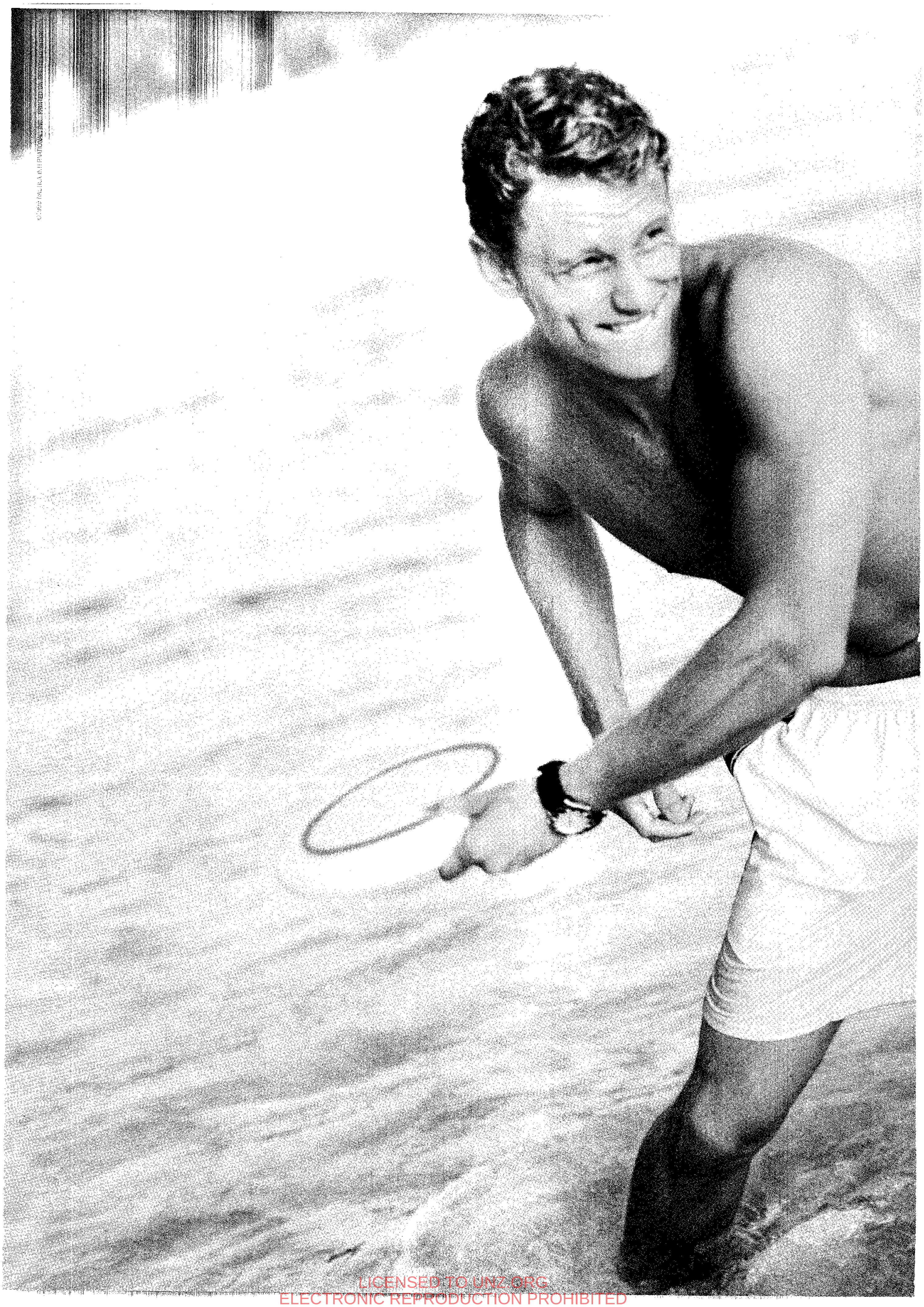

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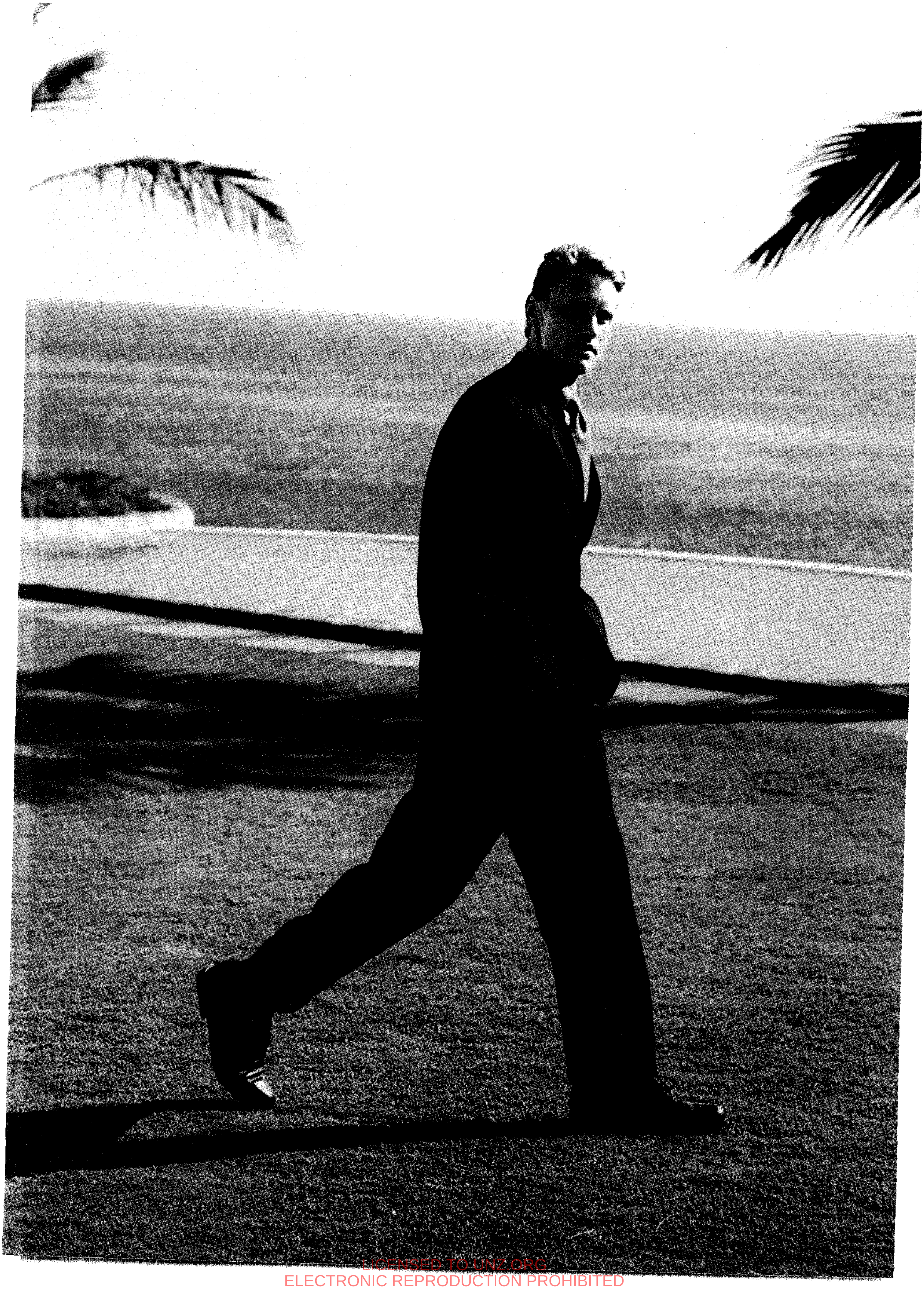

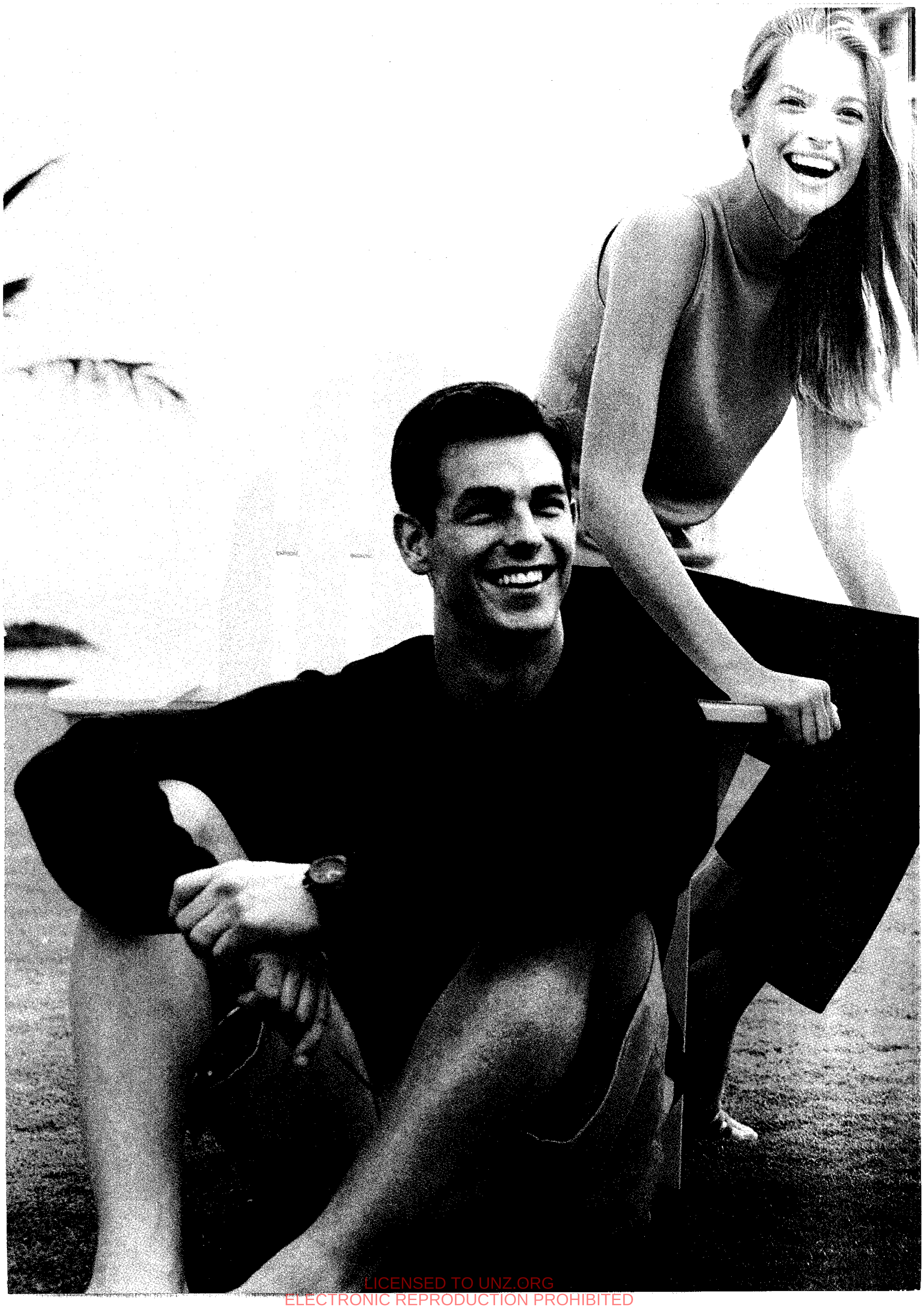

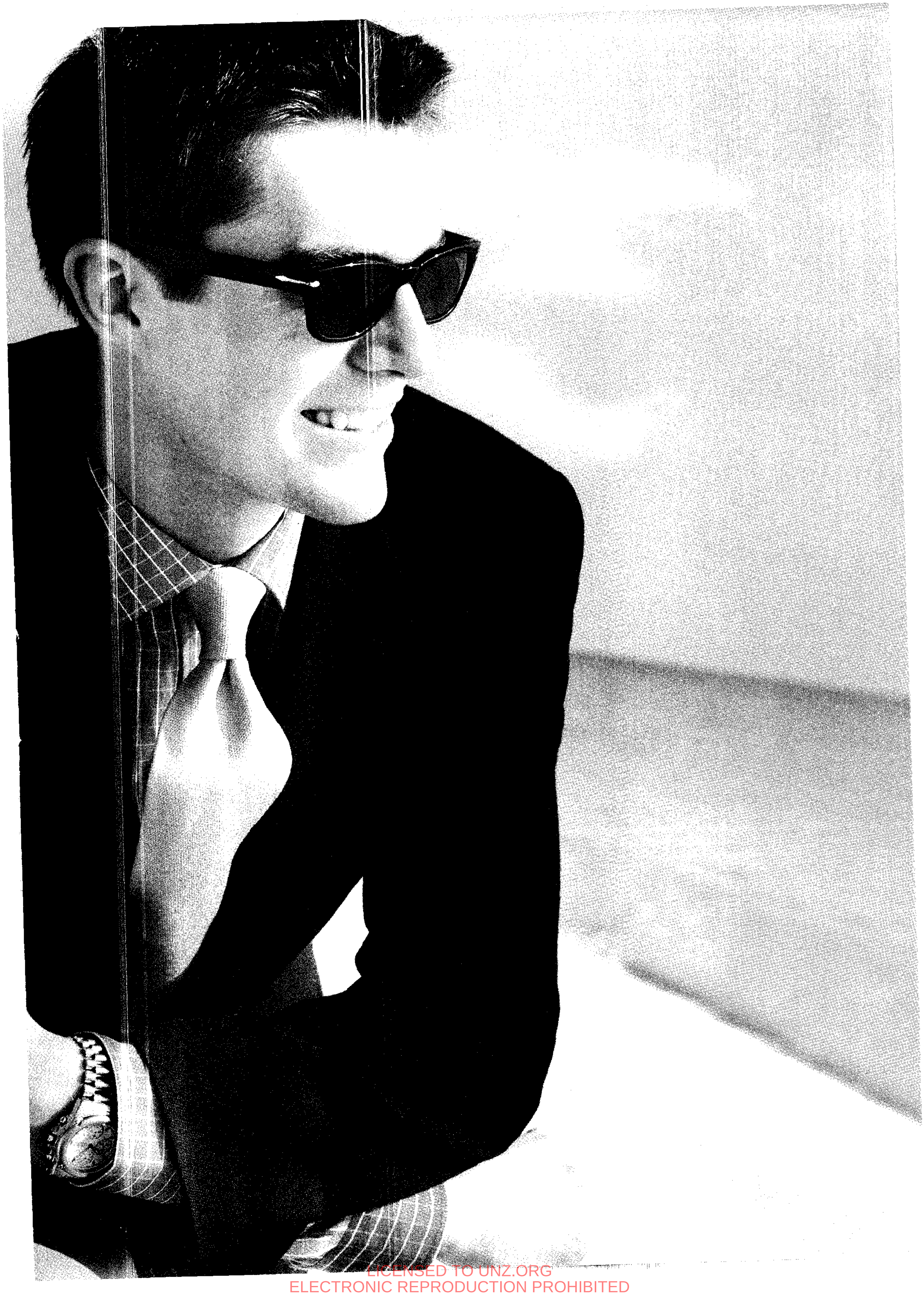

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concentrates on the late bassist-composer's more formal works. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—In assembling a Latin-jazz big band, pianist **EDDIE PALMIERI** (through March 21) keeps alive an institution now more than half a century old. The postwar roots of the momentous fusion of bebop and Afro-Cuban rhythms can still be heard in Palmieri's ensemble, in the gritty tension between the thick-textured horn sections and the percolating Latin percussion. The modal forms and modern harmony that also find their way into this salsa legend's music prove that, for him, cross-cultural interchange is still the only way to go. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Back in the mid-forties, the legendary trumpeter Fats Navarro credited **TEDDY EDWARDS** (through March 21) with being the first genuine bebop tenor saxophonist. Edwards was undoubtedly there at the right time, but he was on the wrong coast. The next five decades found the full-throated stylist sticking to his California roots and watching his chances at greater exposure slip away. Recent appearances at Lincoln Center prove that "virile" and "biting" are two descriptions Edwards will continue to inspire. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—March 17-21: The assured and affecting vocalist **WESLIA WHITFIELD.** Dining.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—March 18: The Brazilian guitarist **VINICIUS CANTUÁRIA** has lived in New York City for the past five years, and rubbing elbows with such local musicians as Bill Frisell, Arto Lindsay, and Laurie Anderson (all of whom contribute to his latest album, "Tucumã") has helped stretch bossa nova to include sampling and other technological tricks. Not that Cantuária needs much creative help; he's written hit songs for Caetano Veloso, Gal Costa, and other Brazilian superstars. The result, though, is a sophisticated and poignant sound, full of both the excitement of being an expatriate and the longing for a homeland. March 22-24: **JOE LOVANO,** the monster modernist, is a magisterial saxophonist and an assured, and daring, bandleader. Fans gave up long ago trying to discern a logical career path in Lovano's peripatetic ways. It's as simple as this: if you love his music, you follow where he leads—he rarely disappoints.

Lenox Lounge, 288 Lenox Ave., between 124th and 125th Sts. (427-0253)—March 19-20: **HAMIETT BLUIETT** coaxes unnatural and beautiful sounds from the baritone saxophone.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through March 21: **MICHELE ROSEWOMAN AND QUINTESSENCE.** Pianist and composer Rosewoman's unclassifiable, defiantly personal music combines darting tropical rhythms with fervent soloing. The excellent saxophonists **STEVE WILSON** and **CRAIG HANDY** try their best to keep up. Dining.

Tonic, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Through March 26: While it wouldn't be a smart move to expect the reincarnation of the Bill Evans trio, a two-week all-acoustic engagement by the acid-jazz funksters **MEDESKI, MARTIN & WOOD** will certainly expose this popular trio's chops and their attitude toward the pieties of the jazz tradition.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through March 21: Jazz doesn't want for master pianists, but there's only one **TOMMY FLANAGAN.** With his imaginative repertoire and the almost alarming unity of his trio, it doesn't get any better. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

West Bank Café, 407 W. 42nd St., at Ninth Ave. (695-6909)—March 19: **MICHAEL WOLFF JAZZWORLD WORKSHOP.** A whole lot of slashing, banging, whacking, and general percussive merriment ensues when jazz pianist Wolff invites drummers of all nations to join him at this weekly engagement, through May 7. Indian tabla player **BADAL ROY,** Latin percussionist **FRANK COLÓN,** and jazz drummer **CLARENCE PENN** help drive the multistylistic beat.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Eighteenth-Century French Drawings in New York Collections." Through April 25. . . . ¶ "The Mirror of the Medieval World" presents two decades' worth of acquisitions by the Cloisters and the Met's department of medieval art. Through July 4. . . . ¶ "Picasso: Painter and Sculptor in Clay." The hundred and seventy-five works on display here might be considered a respectable lifetime œuvre for a full-time potter, but Picasso tossed off most of these works over a fifteen-year period, beginning in 1947—a time when he was equally prolific in painting, printmaking, and sculpting. The range is broad, from witty little plates with clay food stuck on them (a traditional Spanish form) to lovely painted portraits of his mistress, Françoise Gilot, and their children, to evocative vases in a classical mood. Through June 6. . . . ¶ "Anselm Kiefer: Works on Paper 1969-1993" presents fifty-four drawings, watercolors, gouaches, and woodcuts acquired by the museum in 1995. Through March 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Pop Impressions Europe/USA." Printmaking provided Pop artists on both sides of the Atlantic with a medium conducive to their themes, particularly consumerist culture and erotica. For example, one can compare the breast-obsessed œuvres of the Americans Mel Ramos and Tom Wesselmann with those of the Briton Peter Blake or the German K. P. Brehmer. This sharp, focussed exhibition also features plenty of familiar (and often terrific) work by old favorites like Warhol and Lichtenstein (both made silk-screen prints on shopping bags) and a lot of less familiar work by American and especially European artists, including Allan D'Arcangelo, Martial Raysse, Dieter Roth, Patrick Caulfield, and Daniel Spoerri. Through May 18. . . . ¶ A demure exhibition of twenty-five small framed samplers, embroidered by Elaine Reichek. Through March 30. . . . ¶ "Julia Margaret Cameron's Women." Through May 4. . . . ¶ "Sight Gags: Grotesque, Caricature, and Wit in Modern and Contemporary Drawing." Through May 4. . . . ¶ "The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect." Through June 1. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"Picasso and the War Years: 1937-45." Through May 9. . . . ¶ "Jim Dine: Walking Memory, 1959-69." Through May 16. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—"Ray Johnson: Correspondences." Through March 21. . . . ¶ An exhibition of fifty-two Brice Marden drawings. Through March 28. . . . ¶ "Pale Guide to Transparent Things," an exhibition of photographs by Seton Smith. Through April 4. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. (989-5566)—"Double Vision: Stan Douglas and Douglas Gordon." Douglas, a Canadian, and Gordon, a Scot (and a recipient of both the Hugo Boss Prize and the Turner Prize), each use dual-screen projections for their video works. Douglas's "Win, Place, or Show" (1998) allows for as many as two hundred thousand variations of a looping six-minute video based loosely on the style of a late-sixties British Columbian TV show. In it, two actors share a gloomy flat in Vancouver and play out dramatic situations that range from conspiratorial intimacy to physical violence. Gordon's installation appears to be simpler, but it's more trippy. It indulges the obvious melodramatic potential of its source, Otto Preminger's 1949 movie "Whirlpool"; the images on the two screens fold and unfold like a crazy Rorschach, with stroboscopic and Surround Sound effects reinforcing the theme of hypnosis at the film's heart. (For a solo show by Gordon, see Downtown Short List.) Through June 13. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. (288-0700)—"French and English Drawings of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries from the National Gallery of Canada" delivers some works of extraordinary verve and wit, despite its run-of-the-mill title. The English half of the show is more fun: a hilarious, slapstick drawing by Hogarth, "Hudibras Beats Sidrophel and His Man Whacum," is set in what appears to be a wizard's study, with a crocodile suspended from the ceiling and a skeleton in the closet. Next to it is an equally funny Rowlandson watercolor of a monstrous-looking woman in jail, exposing massive breasts to a man too drunk to see them. The French counter with an exquisite Watteau red-chalk study of a pair of dandies, a dramatic Delacroix of Dante and Virgil crossing the River Styx, and a pair of Redons, one of a poet astride a huge Pegasus, the other of an enigmatic raven. The exhibit also includes fine work by Palmer and Turner, Fragonard and Ingres, and others. Through April 25. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

ONLY CONNECT

FashionUK (www.widemedia.com/fashionuk/)—Fashion sites, once an anomaly on the Web, are now flourishing, and the best are produced in Europe. FashionUK (saucily reduced to "f.uk" over there) was launched in 1995 but still has a brash air of youth about it, maintaining a view of the London fashion scene that is both jaded and matter-of-fact. "While the U.K. has oodles of talent," the editors write to one curious outsider, "world market changes and fears of a recession seem to have caused a mini-crisis of confidence in the U.K. fashion market and many designers are struggling."

You'd never know it to look at the clothes—or, for that matter, the stores. The site's shop guide lists scores of London fashion emporiums, each of which is accompanied by a helpful monetary legend (£ £ £ £ = couture prices; £ = market prices), photographs of the shop front (the fanciest look like pricey discos), and a brief description of wares ("Sleek designer lad-wear"). International trends are tracked, too; a roundup of the hottest spring/summer street wear incorporates the latest colors into the austere design while commenting on the contradictory impulses of today's scene.

You can also visit the huge library of links to designers' sites and other fashion Webzines, pages devoted to beauty ("The winter's look for face and nails is all about imperfection and realism"), or the message board, which is called, naturally, "Threads." (Sample post: "confused about what style of shoes with tights! Help!") Mostly, though, FashionUK is about *attitude,* defined in large part by what its editors are against (fur, *Vogue*) as well as what they're for. "London is a post-combat scene at the moment," they write of the current climate. "Trainers are still v. popular but technofibres are giving way to wool & cotton and we are actually wearing shoes." Heaven forfend.

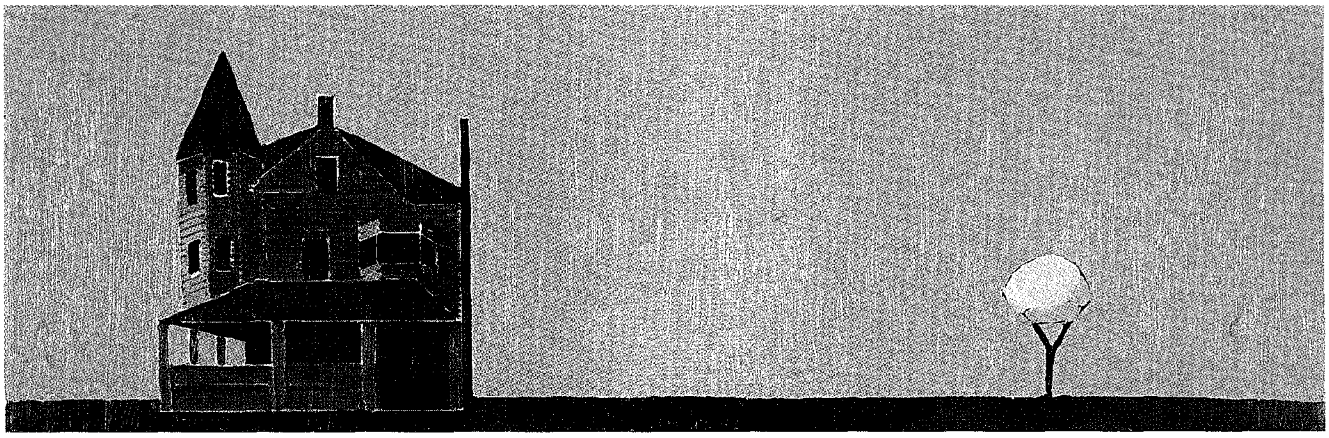
GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Dennis Oppenheim—There's so much going on in this exhibit that one feels a bit out of breath by the end: lacework windmills whirl; intertwined serpents blink crazily; two huge upside-down noses exude a blood-colored steam. Either something is about to happen (a giant bat hangs poised to fly out of its cave) or it has just happened (a football stadium, beautifully crafted of hardwood, has been tipped on its side, and the spectators, hundreds of tiny figures made of black wax, have tumbled out onto the gallery floor). The humor is broad and sparkling, but it resides at the edge of a dark, scary precipice. Through March 27. (Helman, 20 W. 57th St. 245-2888.)

Billy Sullivan—"Writers, Models, and Still Life" is an insider's peek at the lush life of the seventies downtown scene. In the tradition of Ray Johnson and Andy Warhol, a series of watercolors of boys playing sailors in various stages of undress catch the eye. There's a voluptuous female model as well, but it looks as if Sullivan's heart's not in it. Thirteen oil portraits, breezily rendered in bright colors, seem more intent on capturing the moment than the subject. The best piece is an installation of drawings, paintings, and drunken photographs sloppily tacked to the wall, a kaleidoscope of hip glamour dominated by a large, luscious pastel of a very pretty, very pink boy. Through March 27. (Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345.)

Donald Sultan—Powerful paintings in tar, spackle, and other unorthodox mediums that explore the shadowland between figuration and abstraction, a crowded place these days. "Birds June 11 1998" sets silhouettes of blackbirds against a background of floor tiles; the resulting pattern has the abstract elegance of Japanese textile design, but the images float and breathe with the brooding depth of late Rothko. Two paintings of smoke rings are more gestural, with huge white spackle "O"s spiralling across a wonderfully aromatic tar surface. Through March 27. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.)



"Yellow Tree II," by Scott Redden, at Dillon.

"Picasso and Hokusai: Erotica"—The pairing is not as strange as it seems: Picasso owned a collection of nineteenth-century Japanese erotic woodcuts, which near the end of his life he lamely attempted to emulate in a series of etchings. Picasso borrows the figures from Ingres's "Raphael and La Fornarina" and puts them through some contorted sexual positions; in many of them, the Pope follows the action while seated upon a chamber pot. The twelve colored woodblock prints by Hokusai are more imaginative and certainly more amusing: in one of them, a lady dresses her lover's erection in a tiny cap and robe, like those of a Noh dancer. Through April 10. (Yoshii, 20 W. 57th St. 265-8876.)

Short List—**DEBORAH BARRETT**, Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. 861-7338. Through April 17. . . . **GEORGES BRAQUE**, Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 744-7400. Through March 27. . . . **MICHAEL BYRON**, Baron/Boisanté, 50 W. 57th St. 581-9191. Through April 17. . . . **DAVID DEWEY**, Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St. 664-0907. Through April 3. . . . **SUSAN HAUPTMAN**, Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545. Through March 27. . . . **JULIE HEFFERNAN**, Littlejohn, 41 E. 57th St. 980-2323. Through April 17. . . . **JOYCE KOZLOFF**, DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111. Through March 27. . . . **EDGAR LEVY**, MB Modern, 41 E. 57th St. 371-3444. Through March 27. . . . **ANNE PERETZ**, Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Through March 27. . . . **DOUG SAFRANEK**, Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through March 27. . . . **JON SCHUELER**, ACA, 41 E. 57th St., 644-8300; and Perlow, 41 E. 57th St., 644-7171. Both shows through March 27. . . . **THOMAS SCHÜTTE**, Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Through April 3. . . . **CHARLES SELIGER** and **MORRIS GRAVES**, Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082. Both shows through May 1.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Donald Baechler—Large-scale mixed-medium paintings and small works on paper which feature the artist's characteristic, deliberately crude black-outline renderings of heads, some reminiscent of doodles and comics, others apparently derived from Picasso motifs. The grounds are in various murky shades of gray and the surfaces are heavy, serrated, and abraded; the underlying swaths of cloth suggest Frankenstein's Monster before the wraps come off. Along with Baechler's other current show (at Shafrazi, in SoHo), this exhibition suggests that the painter continues to develop while remaining close to his original vision. Through March 27. (Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

Jean-Marc Bustamante—A series of eight thick sheets of Plexiglas upon which the artist has silk-screened enlargements of his small, abstract sketches. The wellspring for this mode is the German artist Gerhard Richter, although it seems to have taken root in France, with such exponents as Bustamante and the more sensuously engaging Bernard Frize. In Bustamante's case, one is either taken by the freeze-dried elegance of these picture-objects or totally confused by them. Or maybe both. Through March 20. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200.)

Peter Fischli and David Weiss—This Swiss duo has built a substantial cult following in those precincts of the art world which favor pointy-headed conceptual cleverness wedded to a disarming, sometimes borderline silly sense of whimsy. The artists are often attracted to situations in which they can exploit the tensions between beauty and cliché. In these ink-jet prints, large-scale slide projections, and slow-dissolve videos, they take on nature photography and push its conventions through the roof. Double-exposed pictures of flowers and mushrooms in different qualities of light yield both amorphous and sharp-focus images of nature in many guises: resplendent, surreal, abstracted, and even menacing. Smart and gorgeous. Through March 20. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.)

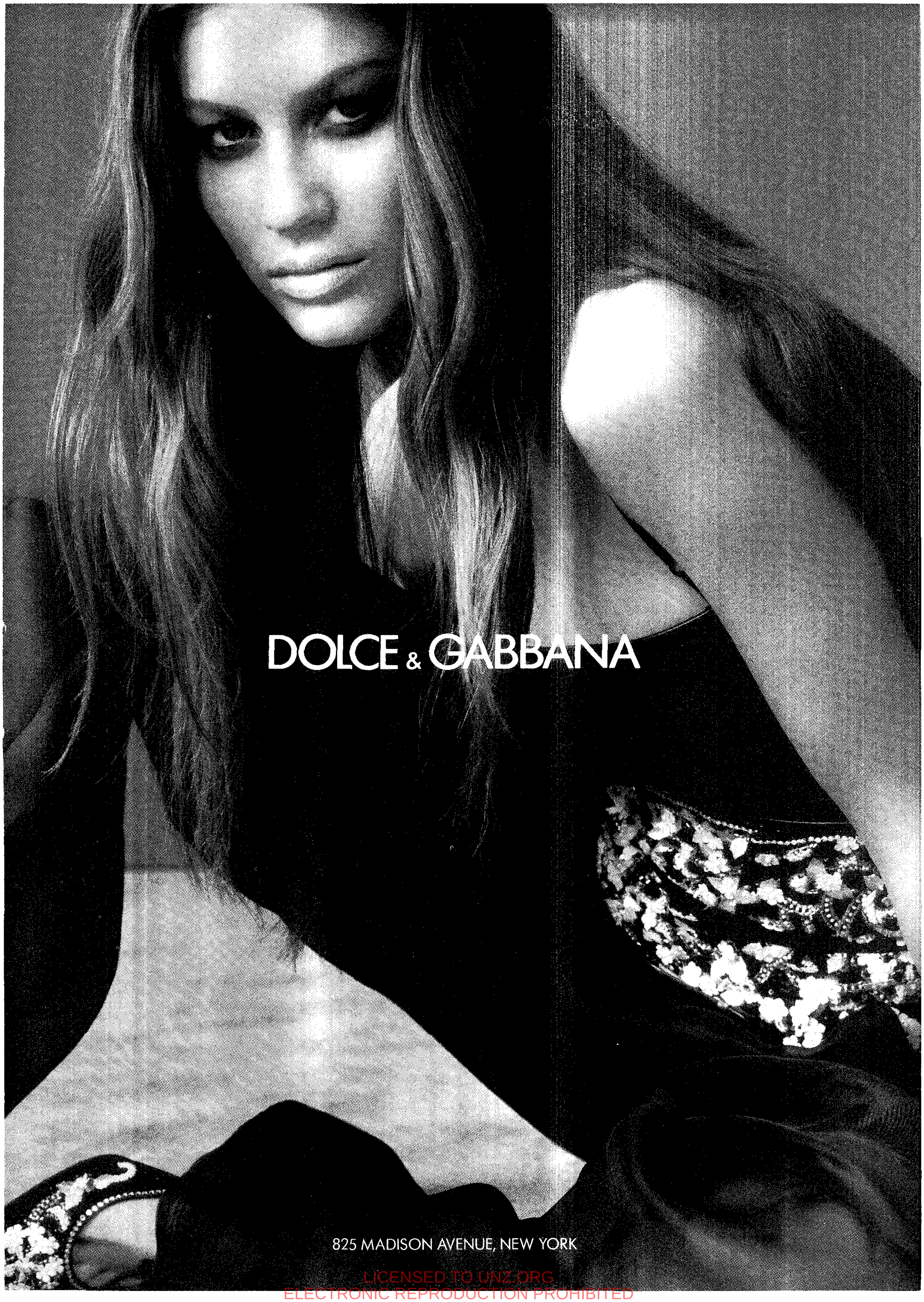
Short List—**JANINE ANTONI**, Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100. Through April 17. . . . **FIONA BANNER**, Guy, 453 W. 17th St. 463-7372. Through April 3. . . . **MARY BEYT**, Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through April 17. . . . **JEREMY BLAKE**, Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500. Through April 10. . . . **STIG BRØGGER**, DCA, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-5511. Through April 17. . . . **DREW DOMINICK**, Team, 527 W. 26th St. 279-9219. Through March 27. . . . **JEFF ELROD** and **LISA RUYTER**, Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366. Both shows through April 10. . . . **GILBERT & GEORGE**, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St. 627-5258. Through March 20. . . . **GRAHAM GILLMORE**, Kirkland, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930. Through April 16. . . . **BETHAN HUWS**, Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 414-4144. Through April 3. . . . **CURTIS MITCHELL** and **FRITZ WELCH**, AC Project Room, 453 W. 17th St. 645-4970. Both shows through April 3. . . . **RUTH ROOT**, Kreps, 529 W. 20th St. 741-8849. Through April 3. . . . **LUCAS SAMARAS**, Grimm, 505 W. 28th St. 564-7662. Closed Tuesdays; through April 17. . . . **JIM SHAW**, Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Through March 27.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Tim Hawkinson—As in his New York show three years ago, Hawkinson transforms ordinary materials into sprawling, intricate installations, testimonials to a berserk yet compulsively disciplined imagination. The centerpiece, "Pentecost," features twelve life-size figures tapping out percussive rhythms on the branches of a gargantuan tree. But there are also tiny marvels: a clock made from a tube of toothpaste, a miniature bird skeleton made from fingernail clippings and superglue. For sheer free-form ingenuity, Hawkinson is the art world's Michael Jordan. Through April 30. (Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.)

Scott Redden—Landscapes with a rare combination of qualities: terse, mysterious, comical. Lonely Victorian houses in solid colors (yellow, red, green, gray) loom against cloudless skies. O.K., maybe one cloud, or a tree. Some clapboard homes dawdle in the distance like maiden aunts, and some crowd to the foreground with an almost laughable pride. The blinds are drawn in all the windows, and still the dwellings burst with character. Through March 25. (Dillon, 431 West Broadway. 966-2977.)

Deborah Rosenthal—Colorful oils that reinterpret the awe of sacred art (in Gothic and Romanesque cathedrals and stained glass, for example) through a modernist eye. The artist uses the rich gestures of twentieth-century spiritual art—the arabesques of Kandinsky, the saturated color of Klee, the dreamy images of Redon—to fashion a personal symbolism based largely on medieval


DOLCE & GABBANA
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sources. Lovely, bright, and lyrical, but shot through with the austerity of ritual. Through July 16. (Joseph Gallery, Hebrew Union College, 1 W. 4th St. 824-2205.)

Short List—**SKIP ARNOLD,** Spencer Brownstone, 39 Wooster St. 334-3455. Through April 3. . . . **DONALD BAECHLER,** Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. 274-9300. Through April 10. . . . **BARBARA BLOOM,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through April 24. . . . **NEKE CARSON,** Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. 941-5777. Through April 3. . . . **ALFREDO CEIBAL,** Malca, 580 Broadway. 966-8854. Through April 10. . . . **DOUGLAS GORDON,** Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828. Through April 10. . . . **SAMM KUNCE,** Gibson, 568 Broadway. 925-1192. Through April 3. . . . **MA LIUMING,** Tilton, 49 Greene St. 941-1775. Through March 20. . . . **RAYMOND PETTIBON,** The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166. Through April 10. . . . **MALCOLM MORLEY,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685. Through March 20. . . . **MEL RAMOS,** Meisel, 141 Prince St. 677-1340. Through March 27. . . . **SERGIO VEGA,** Basilico Fine Arts, 26 Wooster St. 966-1831. Through March 20. . . . **STEPHEN WESTFALL,** Lennon, Weinberg, 560 Broadway. 941-0012. Through March 27.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Stephane Couturier / "Visage"—Large-scale Cibachrome prints of construction sites in Paris, Dresden, and Berlin. If urban progress in the United States looked as beautiful as it does in these pictures—complex fugues of steel and wood and cement, with bright passages of red, orange, and yellow—we'd be charged admission to use the sidewalk. (Another show of Couturier's work is at La Maison Française, New York University, 16 Washington Mews, at University Pl. 998-8750. Closed Saturdays.) / Fifteen vintage portraits by, among others, Julia Margaret Cameron, Walker Evans, Diane Arbus, and Helmar Lerski. Both shows through March 27. (Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.)

"Au Revoir Paris"—A group show marking the closing to the public of the Zabriskie gallery in Paris, with works by Atget, Brassaï, Brancusi, Hugnet, and others. Through April 17. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223.)

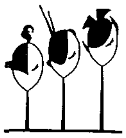
International Center of Photography—"Newman's Gift: 60 Years of Photography," a retrospective of the portraitist Arnold Newman's career. Through June 6. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Short List—**ANSEL ADAMS,** Carter, 560 Broadway. 966-1933. Through May 1. . . . **DAVID ARMSTRONG** and **PAUL BOWLES,** Scalo, 560 Broadway. 334-9393. Both shows through April 17. . . . **JOSEPH BARTSCHERER,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Through April 3. . . . **BERND AND HILLA BECHER,** Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. 966-6160. Through March 27. . . . **TODD EBERLE AND ROBERT POLIDORI,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through April 24. . . . **DAN ESTABROOK,** Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Through April 24. . . . **EVE FOWLER,** Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Through April 10. . . . **ROBERT FRANK,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through April 24. . . . **LEE FRIEDLANDER,** Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Through March 20. . . . **ELDON GARNET,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through April 24. . . . **EDWARD KEATING,** Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; through April 3. . . . **WENDELL MAC RAE,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through April 10. . . . **CLIFFORD ROSS,** Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Through May 1. . . . **ELLEN VON UNWERTH,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223. Through April 3. . . . **NICK WAPLINGTON,** Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. 941-5777. Through April 3. . . . **FREDERIC WEBER** and **AUGUST SANDER,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Both shows through March 27.

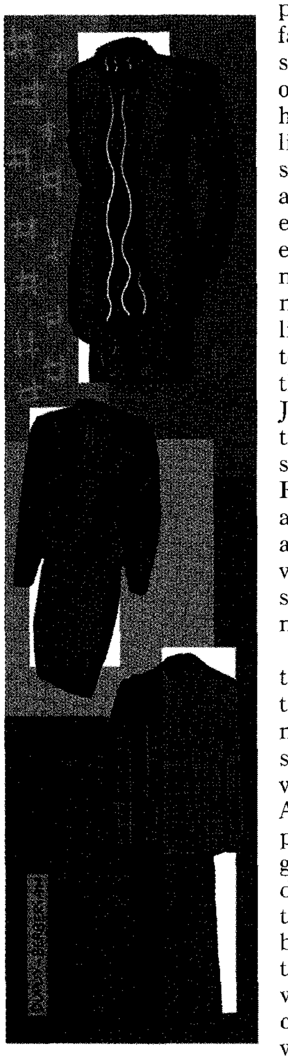
(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art.)

ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

Back from the East



For those who consider New York the fashion capital of the world, it may come as a surprise that there's a stylish subculture of Manhattan women who buy their important clothes from a small Kansas City company that acquires most of its fabric in Japan. If ASIATICA's faithful rarely find themselves in Kansas, they don't really have to: the company's owners, Fifi White and Elizabeth Wilson, bring their exotic wares to New York City three times a year (they also visit San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas, Santa Fe, and Washington). This week and next (March 19-April 2), they are in residence at the Mark Hotel (25 E. 77th St.) with their spring collection; one may stop by for an open house, or make an appointment (744-4300 or 800-731-0831), to choose from the profusion of garments, scarves, and jewelry that festoon their suite. Most of the clothes are made from antique kimono cloth or from new fabric developed by Reiko Sudo, of Nuno (her designs were shown at MOMA's recent exhibition of contemporary Japanese textiles). Although a small selection of the line is available year-round at Bergdorf Goodman, true Asiatica aficionados prefer to shop in the entertaining company of its proprietors.



Fifi White, who wears black spectacles that accent her inquisitive expression, opens the door to the suite. Behind a small desk sits Elizabeth Wilson, a tall brunette with large pale-blue eyes who studied Chinese art history before moving to Kansas City in 1975. Wilson started Asiatica as a small emporium of Chinese and Japanese antiques. White, a collector of textiles, joined her soon after they produced their first shirt, in 1980. Before they knew it, their shared passion for textiles had become a partnership, with Wilson as the manager and White as the designer of what she calls "wearable and elegant Western clothes." They now employ a staff of twenty, and they produce twenty-five hundred pieces a year.

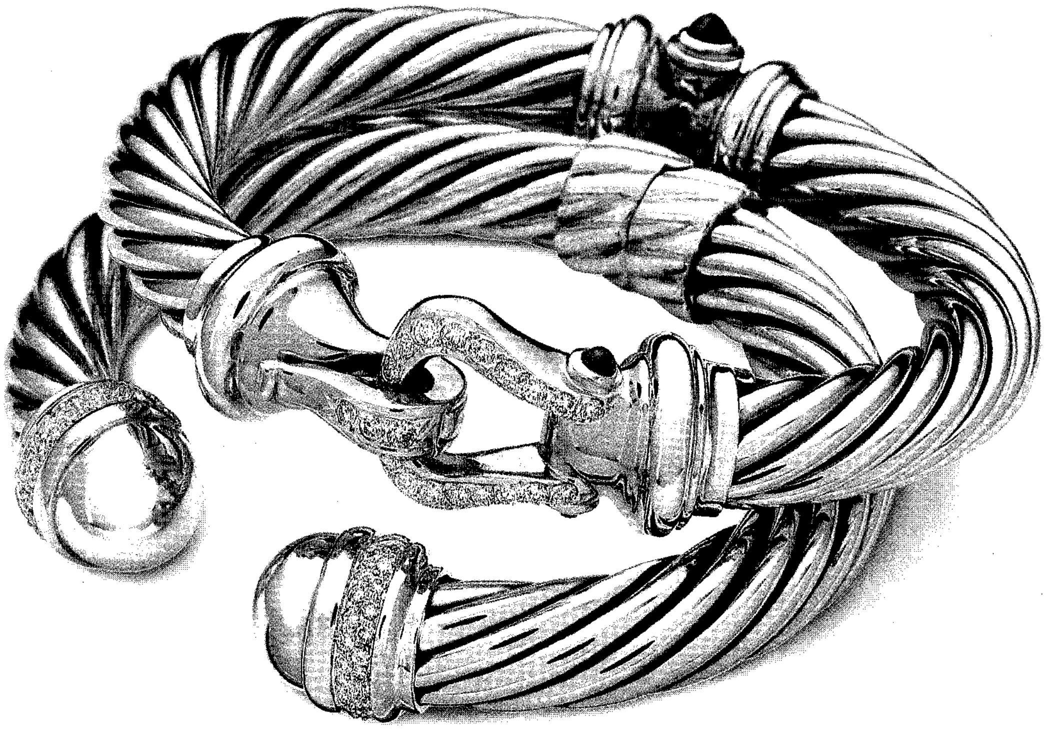
"Our taste runs to the geometric and modern," White says. On each yearly trip to Japan, they look at forty to fifty thousand kimonos and purchase a thousand to disassemble and launch into new life. "This is *mihon*," White says, fingering a blue-and-white cotton shirt deftly pieced from two different fabrics ($1,095). *Mihon* is a sampler material composed of all the designs a kimono house offers in a season. "I like juxtapositions," White says. And, indeed, because a kimono often doesn't yield enough fabric to make an entire Western garment, many Asiatica designs are made from fragments of like color but different pattern. Foreseeing the end of the kimono supply as the Japanese abandon traditional dress, White and Wilson turned to Reiko Sudo. From such Nuno fabric creations as Hong Kong Pucker and Crinkle come clothes with pleated and gathered surfaces that suggest a post-modern Fortuny.

These innovations extend the Japanese tradition of textile virtuosity. Take the mandarin-style evening shirt of black silk damask with a peony weave ($1,095). At a distance, it's the supplementary weft of red and gold—an abstract embroidery of berries and leaves—that catches the eye, not the barely visible blossoms that texture the fabric. You can wear it with black triple-crêpe pants ($495), the wider, slouchy "Arai" pants ($495-$695), or a long, narrow cloque skirt ($495). These accompaniments are made to order in charmeuses, twills, and other substantial silks whose opulent colors complement or enhance the kimono fabric.

To wear Asiatica's clothes is to enter what Fifi White calls "the infinite decorative imagination" of the Japanese. She lifts the edge of a *shibori* jacket made of a vibrant grass green ($1,295). Its pattern is a spill of creamy white circles so tiny you can hardly believe that each one was once tied for dyeing, or that, held up to the light, the fabric's silky surface is inscribed with a wavy thicket of bamboo that brings to mind a riverbank on a languorous afternoon.

DUPUY-BERBERIAN

DAVID YURMAN



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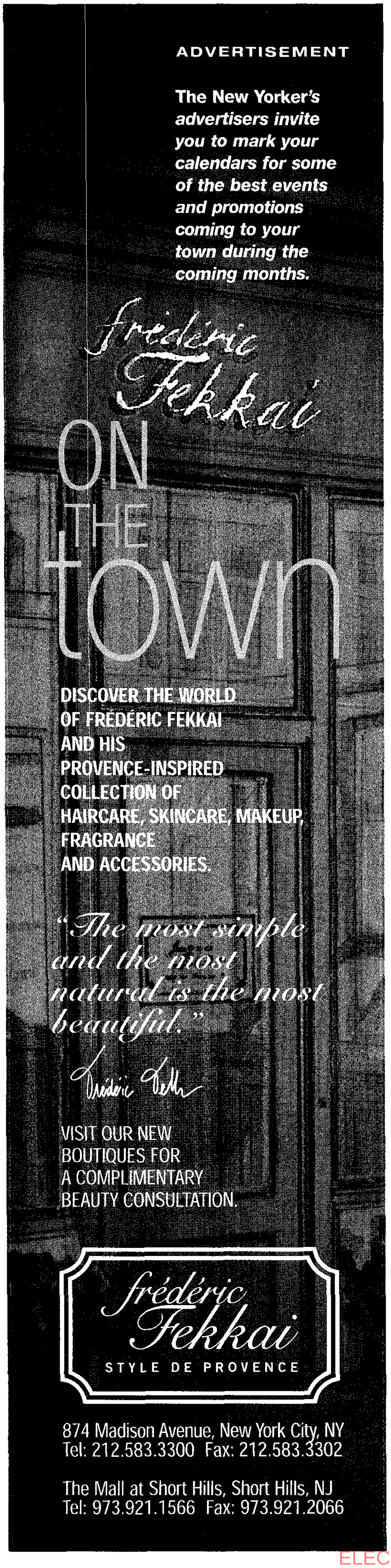

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CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall is 247-7800 and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—KHOVANSHCHINA, by Mussorgsky, with Dolora Zajick, Vladimir Grishko, Vladimir Bogachov, Nikolai Putilin, Paata Burchuladze, and Roberto Scandiuzzi; conducted by Valery Gergiev. (March 17 at 7:30.) . . . With Larissa Diadkova, Mr. Grishko, Robert Brubaker, Richard Paul Fink, Vladimir Ognovenko, and Mr. Scandiuzzi; Mr. Gergiev. (March 20 at 8.) . . . **THE QUEEN OF SPADES,** by Tchaikovsky, with Galina Gorchakova, Olga Borodina, Elisabeth Söderström, Plácido Domingo, Vassily Gerello, and Dmitri Hvorostovsky; Mr. Gergiev. (March 18 at 7:30 and March 22 at 8.) . . . **RIGOLETTO,** with Andrea Rost, Ramón Vargas, and Franz Grundheber; Maurizio Benini. (March 19 and March 23 at 8.) . . . **TOSCA,** with Carol Vaness, Luciano Pavarotti, and James Morris; Nello Santi. (March 20 at 1:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

Opera Nova—Presenting "Oberon, Inc.," an English-language reconception of Weber's "Oberon" as a cautionary tale about hazardous-waste disposal. (Sanford Meisner Theatre, 164 Eleventh Ave., at 22nd St. March 17-20 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 724-8204.)

New York City Opera—March 17 and March 23 at 7:30 and March 20 at 1:30: "Madama Butterfly." . . . ¶ March 18 at 7:30 and March 21 at 1:30: "Lizzie Borden," by Jack Beeson. . . . ¶ March 19 at 8: A double bill of Ravel's two operas, "L'Heure Espagnole" and "L'Enfant et les Sortilèges." . . . ¶ March 20 at 8: "La Bohème." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

"Bremen Town Musicians"—A musical fable by Bryan Johanson, in family performances by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 21 at 1 and 3.)

Juilliard Opera Theatre—Presenting Chabrier's "L'Étoile," fully staged. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. March 22, March 24, and March 26 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, Yuri Temirkanov conducting. March 18 and March 20 at 8 and March 19 at 2: Rodion Shchedrin's Symphony No. 2 and two works by Stravinsky: his Violin Concerto (featuring Hilary Hahn) and his 1919 "Firebird" Suite. . . . ¶ March 23 at 6:45: Stravinsky's Violin Concerto (with Ms. Hahn) and his 1919 "Firebird" Suite. (875-5030.)

American Symphony Orchestra—Serge Koussevitzky (1874-1951) first achieved prominence as a virtuoso on the double bass, astonishing Europe's musical élite by performing cello concertos on that generally less nimble instrument. His more enduring impact, however, derives from his twenty-five-year tenure (beginning in 1924) as conductor of the Boston Symphony, where he commissioned a stream of masterpieces from such composers as Stravinsky and Bartók, and from an entire generation of Americans. He took his commissioning so seriously that in 1940 he established a foundation to continue such undertakings after his death, which it does to this day. In this concert, Leon Botstein conducts Koussevitzky's own Double Bass Concerto (featuring Gary Karr), Stravinsky's 1943 "Ode" (which he underwrote), and two works brought into being by the Koussevitzky Foundation: Richard Wilson's Triple Concerto for Horn, Marimba, and Bass Clarinet (a première) and Karl Amadeus Hartmann's Symphony No. 7 (1958). (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. March 17 at 8.)

New York Treble Singers—A wide-ranging program of music for women's choir, including a scene from Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel's projected "Faust" opera. (Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Fifth Ave. at 55th St. March 19 at 7:30. Admission by contribution.)

BOOK CURRENTS

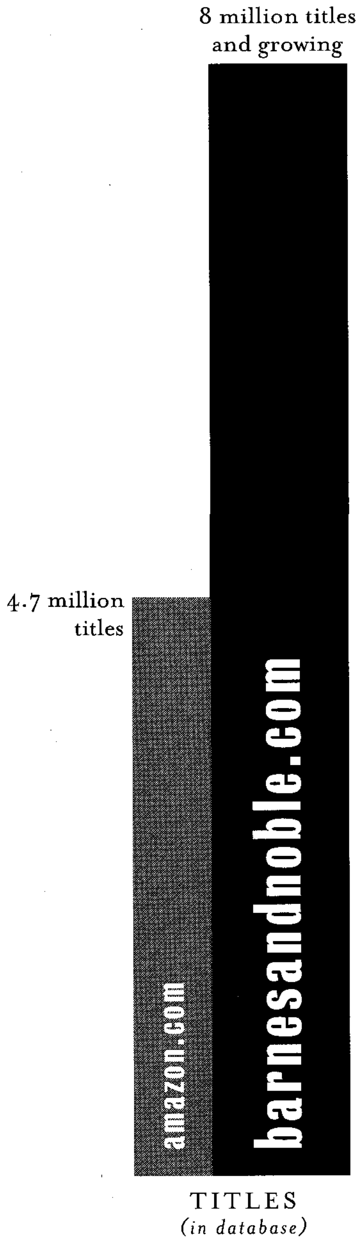
The Anxiety of Flowers

CATHERINE LAZURE

GARDENS in March are generally not at their most eye-catching, unless you're a connoisseur of bare branches and half-frozen soil. But it's now, when the time for spring planting is still a few weeks off, that gardeners are beginning to fantasize about how to turn their acreage into Eden. Various new books offer inspiration to both the most ambitious of horticulturalists and those who would rather dream about gardens than plant them.

For the historically minded, **Washington's Gardens at Mount Vernon,** by Mac Griswold (forthcoming from Houghton Mifflin in May), shows how the first President painstakingly harmonized his estate's function as a working farm with his artistic schemes and personal touches. Across the pond, the great gardens had no aim other than beauty. Mark Laird's **The Flowering of the Landscape Garden: English Pleasure Grounds, 1720-1800** (University of Pennsylvania) examines in sumptuous detail how meticulous planning produced landscapes of lush harmony. "All gardening is landscape-painting," declared the poet and obsessive garden planner Alexander Pope. In **What Gardens Mean** (University of Chicago), Stephanie Ross traces the many classical allusions in Pope's famous Twickenham garden, such as inscriptions from Horace and busts of Homer and Virgil. Extracts of Pope's horticultural poetry appear in Jane Garmey's anthology **The Writer in the Garden** (Algonquin), which also includes Charles Kuralt's tale of a daffodil enthusiast who flatteringly named a new variety Narcissus Charles Kuralt: "I didn't know what narcissism was until I beheld my own narcissus."

No aspect of gardening seems to arouse as much passion as decisions about what flowers to plant. Anna Pavord's visually stunning **The Tulip** (Bloomsbury) traces this perennial's history from its origins in the Middle East (the name comes from the Persian word for turban) through the "tulipomania" speculative boom of seventeenth-century Holland, where a single bulb could cost more than one of Amsterdam's canal-front houses.



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Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment—The period-instrument ensemble offers concertos and other instrumental works by Corelli, Purcell, Vivaldi, and Geminiani. Violinist Catherine Mackintosh and oboist Anthony Robson are the featured soloists. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. March 19 at 8.)

New York Pops—Charles Prince leads a Broadway program. (Carnegie Hall. March 19 at 8.)

Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra and New York Virtuoso Singers—Robert Spano conducts three works allied through their spiritual nature: Stravinsky's Mass, Bach's Cantata No. 4, and Reich's "Tehillim" (with the Synergy vocal ensemble). (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. March 19-20 at 8.)

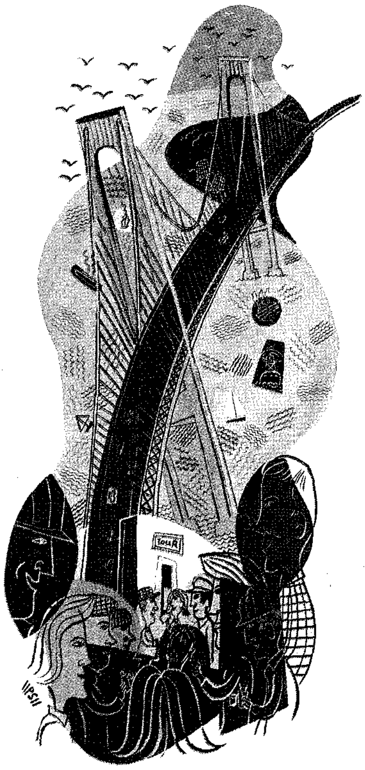
Philharmonia Virtuosi—Richard Kapp leads an orchestral suite by Johann Friedrich Fasch, Haydn's D-Major Cello Concerto (featuring David Geringas), Giorgio Federico Ghedini's Violin Concerto (with Mela Tenenbaum), and Mozart's Symphony No. 33. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. March 20 at 7.)

Dessoff Choirs—Kent Tritle directs twentieth-century American choral works, including Corigliano's "Fern Hill," Stephen Paulus's "Meditations of Li Po," and pieces by Barber, Hindemith, and Rorem. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 20 at 8.)

Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard leads eight pieces by Saint-Saëns, most of them rarely performed. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. March 22 at 2 and 7 and March 23 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra—Jesús López-Cobos conducts Joel Hoffman's "Millennium Dances," Lalo's rarely played Cello Concerto (featuring Lynn Harrell), and Strauss's "Ein Heldenleben." (Carnegie Hall. March 22 at 8.)

St. Thomas Choir of Men and Boys and Concert Royal—Gerre Hancock directs the chorus and period-instrument orchestra in Handel's oratorio "Israel in Egypt," with sopranos Julianne Baird and Marcia Young, countertenor Dana Marsh, tenor Gregory Carder, and basses Philip Cutlip and Glendower Jones. (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 664-9360. March 23 at 7:30.)



NARROWS ESCAPE: *By 1964, a bridge from Brooklyn to Staten Island had been talked about for nearly a century, but it took the city's master bridge builder, Othmar H. Ammann, to make the Verrazano-Narrows a reality. And it took Ammann's right-hand man, Leopold H. Just, who died last month, to turn Ammann's designs into workable plans. Just supervised more than a hundred engineers and draftsmen, who worked out how to space the bridge's three million rivets and one million bolts, and how exactly to use 721,600 cubic yards of concrete. The steel cables of the 4,260-foot span expand and contract with the seasons; the double-deck roadway is twelve feet lower in summer than in winter. You probably never thought about any of this, but you can bet Just did. For information on a tour of the bridge, see Above and Beyond.*

Cincinnati Pops—Erich Kunzel leads an all-Ellington program. (Carnegie Hall. March 23 at 8.)

RECITALS

Clarion Music Society—In 1708, Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, a Roman patron of the arts, arranged a sort of musical duel between two brilliant keyboard players and composers whom he occasionally employed, Georg Friedrich Handel and Domenico Scarlatti. In these performances of solo, chamber, and vocal works by both composers (and three of their contemporaries), the Clarion musicians offer a glimpse of what that musical battle might have sounded like, employing a harpsichord once owned by Cardinal Ottoboni. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. March 17 at 8.)

Bargemusic—Cellist Fred Sherry and pianist Pedja Mucijevic perform Beethoven's Cello Sonata No. 3; violinist Timothy Fain and Mr. Musijevic offer Cole Fredrick's "Portals"; and all three join for Beethoven's D-Major Piano Trio (Op. 70, No. 1). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. March 18 at 7:30 and March 21 at 4.)

Hilliard Ensemble—Four years ago, when plainchant was a hot item, this men's vocal quartet issued "Officium" (on ECM New Series), a conceptual recording in which they solemnly intoned Gregorian chants while the saxophonist Jan Garbarek improvised riffs. Now they're teaming up with Garbarek again to try to breathe new life into the idea (assuming there was any there in the first place). This time, the vocal component ranges beyond chant to encompass vocal pieces from many centuries. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. March 19 at 8. For information about tickets, call 721-6500.)

James Richman—The harpsichordist plays works by Bach (his G-Major "French" Suite) and by four masters of the French Baroque: Jean-Henri D'Anglebert, François Couperin, Jean-Philippe Rameau, and Jacques Duphly. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. March 19 at 8.)

PETER SELGIN

The Queen's Chamber Band—The modern-instrument Baroque ensemble performs a Bach's-birthday concert that includes his Fifth "Brandenburg" Concerto. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. March 21 at 2. For information about tickets, call 932-9462.)

Tallis Scholars—The British chamber choir offers works from Tudor England. (Christ Church and Holy Family, 320 Clinton St., at Kane St., Brooklyn. March 21 at 3. For information about tickets, call 800-627-0655.)

Reiko Watanabe—Sonatas by Schubert, Strauss, Ysaÿe, and Copland, in addition to Franz Waxman's "Carmen Fantasy," make up the program for the violinist's New York début recital. Pianist Sandra Rivers assists. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. March 21 at 3.)

Amati String Quartet—This Swiss foursome, founded in 1981, performs quartets by Mozart (in F Major, K. 158), Janáček (his Second, "Intimate Letters"), and Schumann (in A Major). (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. March 21 at 5.)

Iris Regev and Nelson Padgett—The cellist and the pianist team up for a program of solos and duets by Bach. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. March 21 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Curtis Macomber and James Winn—The violinist and the flutist perform Stravinsky's "Duo Concertant," in addition to works by Bruce Adolphe, Brian Fennelly, Gao Weijie, Matthew Greenbaum, Louis Karchin, and Arthur Kreiger. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 22 at 8.)

Elysium String Quartet—Members of the New York Philharmonic assist the foursome in chamber works for mixed ensembles: Beethoven's Sextet in E-Flat Major (Op. 81b), Mozart's D-Major Divertimento (K. 251), and Martinů's Quintet for Two Clarinets and String Trio. (Weill Recital Hall. March 22 at 8.)

Miró String Quartet—The foursome performs the Quartet No. 3 by the Chinese-Canadian composer Chan Na Kim, in addition to Beethoven's B-Flat-Major Quartet (Op. 18, No. 6) and Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" Quartet. (Alice Tully Hall. March 23 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

Donald Berman—Performing piano works by Bright Sheng, Jeff Nichols, Robert Palmer, Martin Boylcan, Dana Brayton, Arthur Levering, Ives, and Ruggles (surprisingly, the première of two short pieces by this late American master). (Merkin Concert Hall. March 23 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Readings—March 21 at 3: By Guyanese poet, playwright, and novelist Jan R. Carew, from his work. (Brooklyn Public Library, Flatbush Ave. at Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ March 22 at 7:30: By actors S. Epatha Merkerson, Dael Orlandersmith, and Roger Guenveur Smith, from the works of James Baldwin. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 399-3030.) . . . ¶ March 23 at 7: By novelist Jim Shepard and humorist Mark Leyner, from their work. (Russian Samovar, 256 W. 52nd St. Tickets at the door.)

Talks—March 18 at 8: Choreographer Trisha Brown discusses her new production of Monteverdi's opera "L'Orfeo" and her work "Canto/Pianto." A group of her dancers will illustrate some of her latest ideas. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949.) . . . ¶ March 22 at 7: Duke Ellington biographer Mark Tucker talks about the pianist's style. (Morse Hall, Juilliard School, 155 W. 65th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ March 23 at 7: Critic Joe Ruzicka considers the work of artist Jim Dine. (Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 423-3587.)

Tour—M.T.A. archivist Laura Rosen presents a lecture on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge and then leads a tour of its Staten Island anchorage. (For more information, call 718-234-8601. March 21 at 11.)

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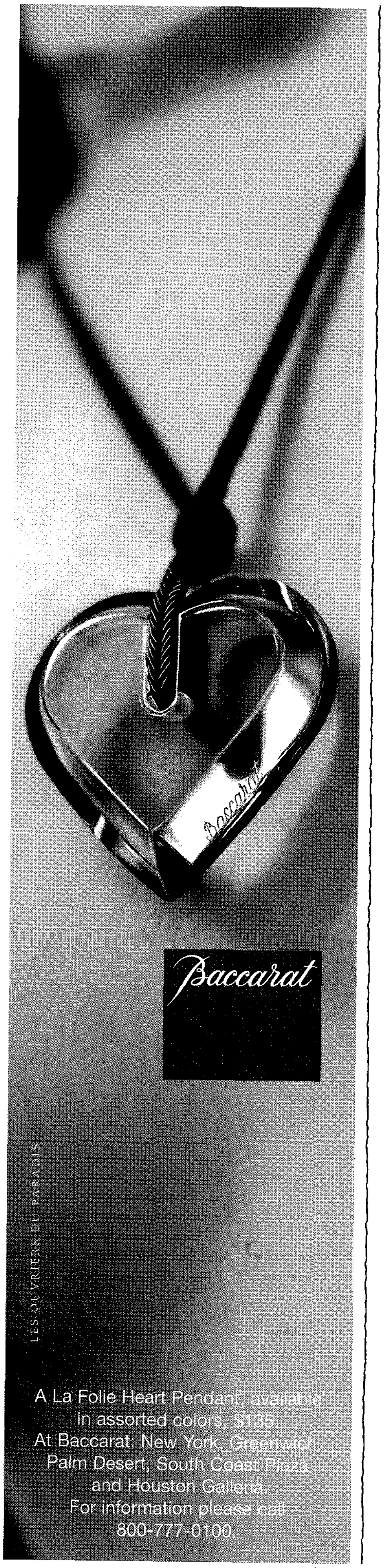
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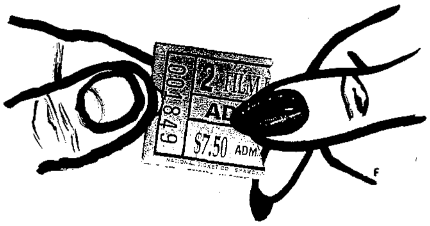


THE MOVIES

OPENING

Forces of Nature—A romantic comedy, with Sandra Bullock and Ben Affleck. Directed by Bronwen Hughes. Opening March 19. (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, State, and Union Square.)

I Stand Alone—A drama about a French ex-convict trying to rebuild his life; directed by Gaspar Noé. Opening March 17. (Film Forum.)

The King and I—Richard Rich's animated version of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical. Opening March 19.

Ravenous—A story of cannibalism in the Sierra Nevadas in 1847, with Guy Pearce and Robert Carlyle. Directed by Antonia Bird. Opening March 19. (Union Square and Ziegfeld.)

The Rook—A private detective (Martin Donovan) investigates a murder in a future that is distinctly medieval, in a film directed by Eran Palatnik. Opening March 19. (The Screening Room.)

Sparkler—A comedy about three men and a woman (Jamie Kennedy, Freddie Prinze, Jr., Steven Petrarca, and Park Overall) and their adventures in Las Vegas. Directed by Darren Stein. Opening March 19. (Quad Cinema.)

True Crime—An adaptation of Andrew Klavan's novel about a reporter (Clint Eastwood) who tries to save a death-row convict from execution. Directed by Eastwood. Opening March 19. (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

FILM NOTES

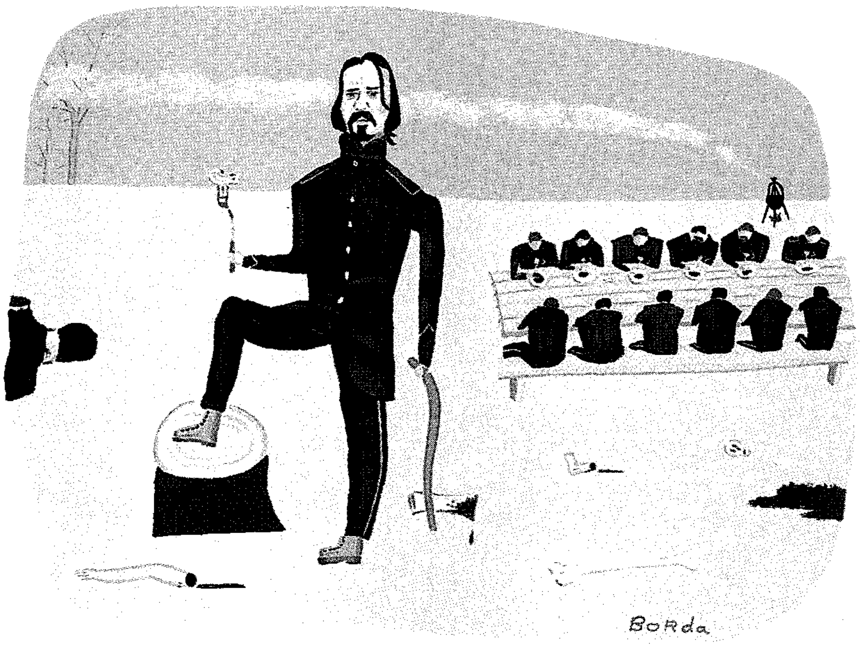
(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

Affliction—Nick Nolte, committing himself to a difficult part with a manly readiness that inspires affection, even awe, is Wade Whitehouse, a divorced policeman and hired hand floundering badly in a snowbound New Hampshire town. Both kindly and belligerent, Wade misses the meaning and rhythm of events, and reacts too much or too little, erupting in anger over what he should laugh off, ridiculing what he should take seriously. Writer-director Paul Schrader flinches at nothing and takes us deep into the texture and causes of this man's failure. With James Coburn as Wade's horrifying father, Willem Dafoe as his brother, Sissy Spacek as his girlfriend, and Mary Beth Hurt as his ex-wife. Schrader adapted Russell Banks's 1989 novel himself.—*David Denby* (1/11/99) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Street Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

Analyze This—You can see the jokes coming well in advance, but you still laugh uncontrollably. Robert De Niro is the mafia boss who is having panic attacks at crucial moments, and Billy Crystal is the mild, bored little shrink who becomes his doctor and friend. What makes the film so effective is that the two men form a real bond—each fulfills some need in the other. Director Harold Ramis's experience is evident in almost every scene; he doesn't push the farce too hard. With a superb performance by Joseph Viterelli as the boss's embarrassed right-hand man. Written by Kenneth Lonergan, Peter Tolan, and Ramis.—*D.D.* (Coronet Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

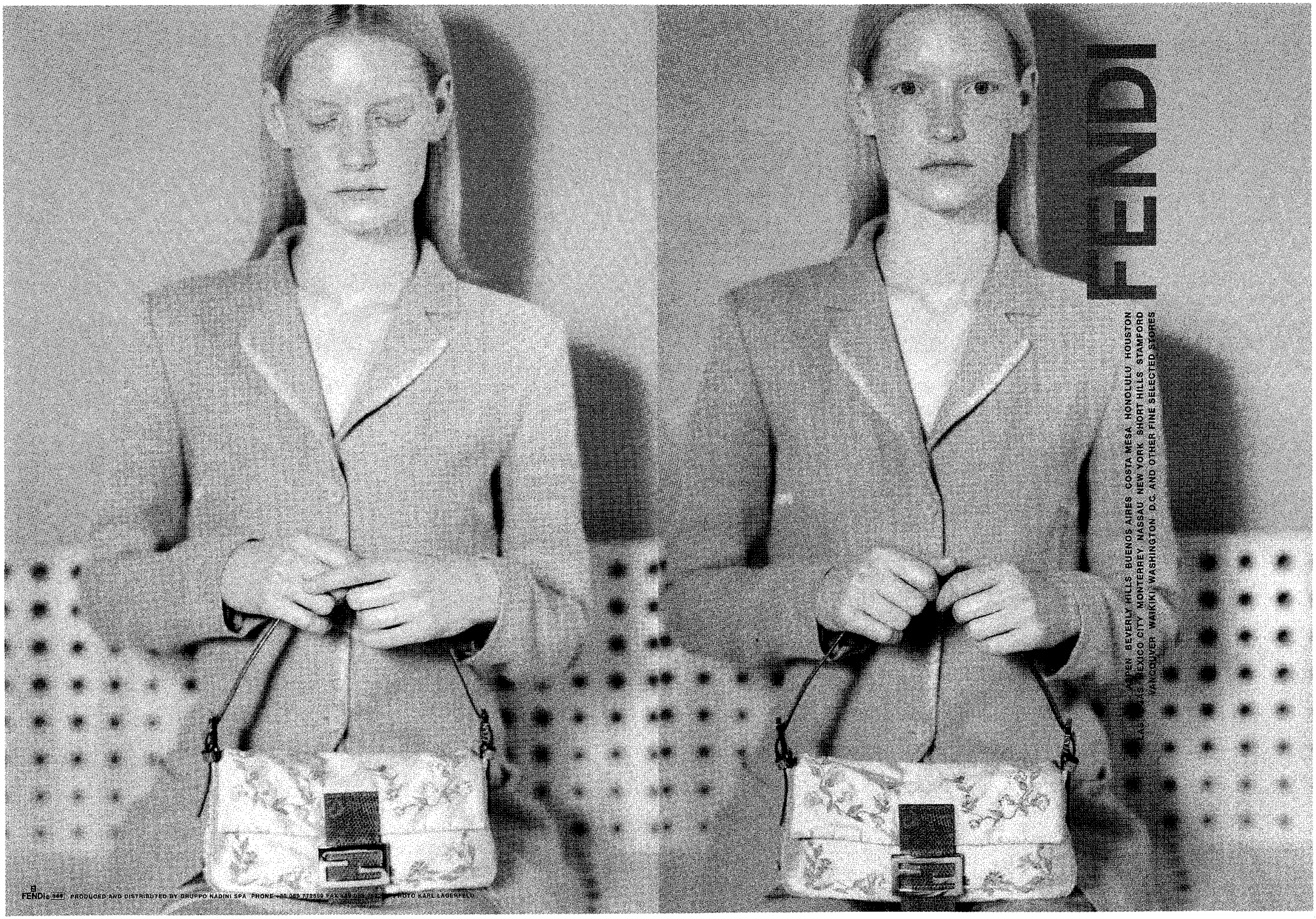
The Boys in the Band (1970)—A gathering of gay men at a birthday party; it's like the gathering of bitchy ladies in "The Women," but with a forties-movie bomber-crew cast: a Catholic, a Jew, a black, a hustler, one who is butch, one who is nellie, and so on. They crack jokes while their hearts are breaking. William Friedkin directed Mart Crowley's adaptation of his own play; Crowley preserved the text as if the quips were ageless.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum 2; starting March 19.)

Central Station—Against her nature, Dora (Fernanda Montenegro), an intelligent but nihilistic old bag—a retired schoolteacher who writes letters for illiterate people and then never mails them—leaves Rio de Janeiro with a little boy in tow and takes to the road. The boy's mother has been killed, and his desire to see his missing father stirs something in Dora. The two of them are practically hoboes, but once they leave Rio life opens up for them. This shrewd, tough, and big-



Opening March 19, Robert Carlyle in Antonia Bird's "Ravenous."

JULIETTE BORDA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hearted Brazilian movie, directed by Walter Salles, moves surely and convincingly from utter negation to something like guarded optimism. In Portuguese.—*D.D.* (11/30/98) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

Cruel Intentions—Yet another version of "Les Liaisons Dangereuses," Choderlos de Laclos's stunning 1782 novel about sexual gamesmanship and betrayal. This one is set in contemporary Manhattan, among the spoiled youth of an Upper East Side private school. It's not boring (given the subject, how could it be?), but almost nothing in it works. The elaborate apparatus of sex—seductions, lies, strategic refusals—seems merely peculiar without the eighteenth-century social conventions to support it, and most of the dialogue comes off as arch. Sarah Michelle Gellar looks too old to play a scheming high-school senior, and Ryan Phillippe, as her irresistibly handsome half brother, pouts his way through his role. Only Selma Blair, as a big, goofy girl who keeps falling out of bed, shows a zest for comedy. Reese Witherspoon plays the virgin on whom Phillippe works his charms. Written and directed by Roger Kumble, who has the actors emphasize certain phrases unnaturally so as to appear knowing and vicious.—*D.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

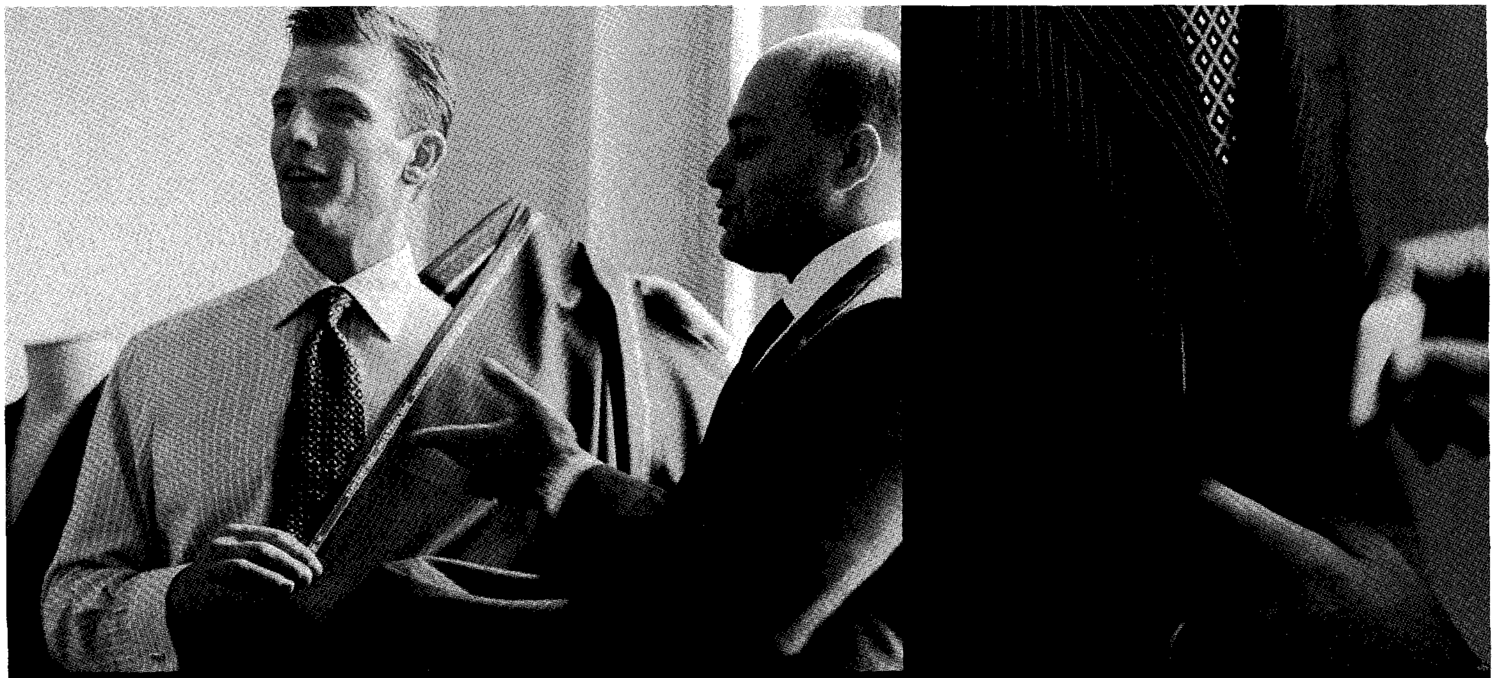
Dancemaker—Director Matthew Diamond profiles the American choreographer Paul Taylor, and the result is freer than the usual stolid arts documentary—rather like the instinctual, unpretentious style of Taylor's work itself. Interviews with Taylor and his dancers, shots of stop-and-go rehearsals, archive footage of Taylor as a lonely kid growing up on a farm, and stills of him as a star soloist with Martha Graham in the late fifties all amplify one theme: Taylor is an artist whose instrument is other artists. There's a poignant, uncomfortable intimacy to his creative process; watching his troupe at work over the years is like watching lovers come together and drift apart.—*Sarah Kerr* (Film Forum.)

The Deep End of the Ocean—Beth (Michelle Pfeiffer), a busy American mom, breaks the first law of child rearing and looks away from her three-year-old son in a crowded public room. The boy is snatched, and in the next few years the mom falls apart. The strongest thing in this adaptation of Jacquelyn Mitchard's best-seller, by Ulu Grosbard (director) and Stephen Schiff (screenwriter), is the portrait of Beth as a neurotically self-centered and self-dramatizing sufferer who, in her misery, makes life hell for everyone else. Pfeiffer digs into the role and won't let go. The rest of the movie is conventionally earnest, and when the boy shows up again, nine years later, and doesn't remember anything, the gimmickry at the heart of Mitchard's story begins to overwhelm us. With Treat Williams as the sturdy but rather dim father, Ryan Merriman as the returnee at the age of twelve, and Whoopi Goldberg, looking for a reason to be in the movie, as a kindly police detective. The obtrusive music is by Elmer Bernstein.—*D.D.* (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Devil Is a Woman (1935)—Directed by Josef von Sternberg and starring Marlene Dietrich, this is the most famous version of "La Femme et le Pantin," Pierre Louÿs's short novel about a femme fatale, published in 1898. It's a story of obsessive love, and von Sternberg's version is certainly obsessive. There's a slightly crazy daringness about his approach to the mythic; you're never invited into the heroine's state of mind.—*P.K.* (A Different Light Bookstore; March 21.)

8mm—When a big Hollywood picture starts courting the movie buffs in the audience, it must be in trouble; when it starts with a shot of a movie projector and boasts a hero called Welles, hold your nose. This grim new work from Joel Schumacher takes itself so seriously that there were reports of frivolous laughter in the theatres. The Welles in question, played by Nicolas Cage, is a private detective who is asked to watch a snuff movie and to find out just how snuffy it is—whether a young woman was actually killed onscreen. His quest leads him to Los Angeles and New York, and to a slow crawl through the belly of the porno industry. The problem here is not that Schumacher's approach is exploitative but that it's boring; poor Catherine Keener, playing Welles's wife, has the thankless task of sitting at home waiting for her man to call with yet more recitations of gloom. The usually sprightly Cage seems locked and barred; the only fun comes when he teams up with Joaquin Phoenix, a bemused observer of the hard-core scene. But not even Phoenix can save a film that solemnly fulfills everything you guessed in the first ten minutes.—*Anthony Lane* (3/8/99) (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, Union Square, and Waverly.)

Elizabeth—A grisly, flamboyant account of the Virgin Queen's early days as a monarch. Screenwriter Michael Hirst alters and conflates events that took place over many years—by degrees, Elizabeth (Cate Blanchett), a Protestant surrounded by powerful Catholics, takes control of England by pulling off a kind of internal coup d'état. The means of her ascension is Sir Francis Walsingham (Geoffrey Rush), a perfect Machiavellian character who serves the Queen as adviser, deadly assassin, and spy. Elizabeth's climb to power, however, is a personal disaster: the supple-waisted maiden with



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long red hair becomes stiff and harsh, emerging from her youth white-faced and trapped in the armor of a thick brocade dress. The movie is a horror film masquerading as a historical pageant. Directed by Shekhar Kapur.—*D.D.* (11/16/98) (Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Union Square.)

House of Strangers (1949)—Joseph L. Mankiewicz combined elements of "King Lear" with the story of Joseph and his brothers in this tale of a ruthless Italian-American banking magnate (Edward G. Robinson, at his juiciest) and his four combative sons. The dialogue contains tinny bits of moralism about the patriarch's legacy of hate, and the plot hinges shakily on a romance between the favorite son (Richard Conte), who is a lawyer, and a glamorous client (Susan Hayward). Putting the classical ingredients together in a cutthroat Lower East Side setting created a new urban archetype: many immigrant clans saw themselves reflected in the movie, which foreshadowed "The Godfather."—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; March 21.)

Life Is Beautiful—Would that it were. The great, donkey-faced Italian clown Roberto Benigni attempts an ambitious fable of comedy's redemptive power. He plays an Italian Jew who keeps alive his little boy's innocence in a Nazi concentration camp by pretending that the routines of the camp are no more than an intricate game staged for his son's benefit. But Benigni's ironic counter-reality undermines this movie, not the Nazis, who were beyond ridicule for the same reason that they were beyond rationality. Totalitarianism makes the fantastic literal—that is its demonic appeal. Benigni's jokes and games just aren't enough, and you leave the movie thinking that what's touching is not Benigni's ministrations to the little boy but his own need to believe in comedy as salvation. With Giorgio Cantarini, who has the heartbreaking quality of the children in the old neorealist movies, as the boy. In Italian.—*D.D.* (11/16/98 and 3/15/99) (Angelika Film Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Paris, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and 72nd Street East.)

Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels—This début film from Guy Ritchie, a young English writer and director, was a big hit in Britain, though it's hard to see why. Four London lads owe half a million pounds to a man with the subtle sobriquet of Hatchet Harry. Learning of an upcoming drug theft, they lie in wait and rob the robbers; all goes well until their fence, Nick the Greek (Stephen Marcus), unwittingly tries to sell the drugs back to the very person who owned them in the first place. It's a neat twist in a nicely wrapped plot; if only the rest of his flimsy film lived up to it. Ritchie has previously shot commercials, and he can't begin to shake the habit; he treats the camera as a decorative toy—something you spin around at the first threatening hint of normality. Thank heaven, then, for Vinnie Jones, who plays a debt collector called Big Chris. Jones used to be a soccer player of fearsome repute, and he still stares at other men as if deciding where exactly to kick them.—*A.L.* (3/8/99) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

The School of Flesh—For his new movie, Benoît Jacquot, best known for "A Single Girl," has set a Yukio Mishima novel in present-day Paris. The transplant is all too successful; the whole thing feels French to its fingertips. French cinema has long thrived on the romantic mismatch, and in this case it's Older Woman meets Younger Man; to be precise, we get the uptight businesswoman (Isabelle Huppert) letting her hair down for the sake of a poor bartender (Vincent Martinez), who has a colorful sexual record and no morals to speak of. If this were a Hollywood production, the hustling youth would find true love in return; the strength of Jacquot's take on the affair is that he is prepared to show his lovers not changing, or skirting change and then pulling back in fear. Only in bed do the two leads understand each other, and sometimes not even there. Word has it that French viewers thought there was too little sex in the movie; American viewers may think there's too much. *Vive la différence.* In French.—*A.L.* (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Shakespeare in Love—A ripely emotional comedy-fantasia—concocted by director John Madden and screenwriters Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard—of how Shakespeare came to write "Romeo and Juliet." In 1593, young Will (Joseph Fiennes), a stud with liquid eyes and full lips, is just an unhappy and unproductive hack, jealous of the greater Christopher Marlowe (Rupert Everett). At first the movie comes at us too broadly, with many facetiously anachronistic jokes about the grubby professional routines of the theatre. But Will falls in love with the fictional heiress Viola de Lesseps (Gwyneth Paltrow), and when these two poeticizing lovers climb into bed, and Shakespeare's quill begins to fly, the cleverness catches fire and "Shakespeare in Love" turns into an exciting literary-erotic entertainment. With Geoffrey Rush as the theatre manager Henslowe and Judi Dench as a supremely intelligent and wittily dominating Queen Elizabeth.—*D.D.* (12/21/98) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, and 34th Street Showplace.)

A Slight Case of Murder (1938)—A black farce in the manner of "Arsenic and Old Lace." It's a burlesque of gangster films, with Edward G. Robinson as a bootlegger who turns legitimate and forces one mortifying mess after another. He drives his family out for a

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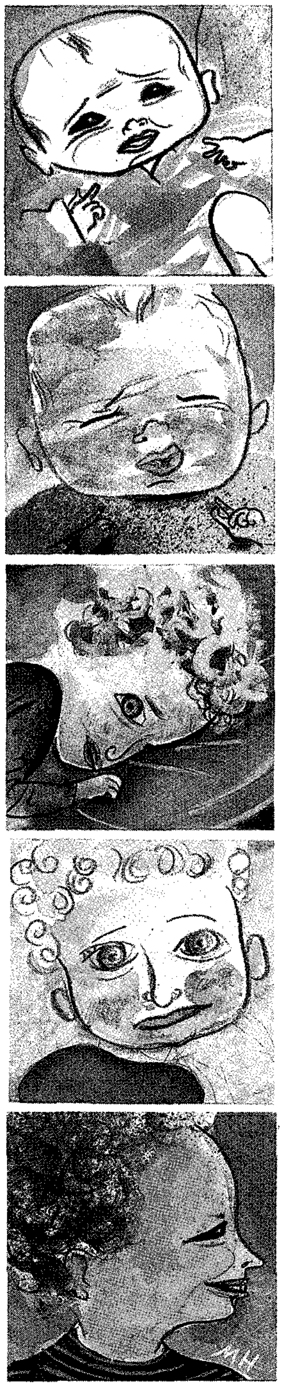
weekend in a country house and finds the corpses of four gangsters sitting around a table in the spare bedroom. Eventually, at a party back in town, the four are brought in and strung up on hooks in a closet. The director, Lloyd Bacon, succeeds in getting giggles out of some of these scenes, but his style is too broad, and the tone of the film is archly childish.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; March 21.)

200 CIGARETTES—A noisy, brightly lit, undistinguished but highly populated comedy about young people trying to hook up with someone—anyone—on New Year's Eve in 1981, in the East Village. They prowl the streets, brush up against one another in bars, and finally wind up at the same party at midnight. Directed by Risa Bramon Garcia, this disposable date movie is not so much written and acted as *cast*—just about every young actor in the country is in it (it's no wonder: this is casting director Bramon Garcia's directorial début). Paul Rudd and Courtney Love have the best roles, as two people who have been friends for so long that they have lost the impulse to go to bed together. The other revellers include Christina Ricci, Jay Mohr, an Affleck or two, Janeane Garofalo, Dave Chappelle, Martha Plimpton, Kate Hudson, and, glimpsed for a second, Elvis Costello.—*D.D.* (3/15/99) (East 85th Street, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

ALSO PLAYING

AMERICAN HISTORY X: Village East Cinemas. . . . **BABY GENIUSES:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **BLAST FROM THE PAST:** 84th Street Sixplex, Orpheum VII, and Union Square. . . . **CHILDREN OF HEAVEN** (reviewed in our issue of 2/15/99): Chelsea Cinemas. . . . **THE CORRUPTOR:** 84th Street Sixplex, Gotham Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **DEVIL'S ISLAND:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **GODS AND MONSTERS** (11/9/98): Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Quad Cinema, and 62nd & Broadway. . . . **HANDS ON A HARD BODY:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE HARMONISTS:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **HILARY AND JACKIE** (1/18/99): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Union Square. . . . **JUST THE TICKET:** Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, and Union Square. . . . **THE LAST DAYS:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE** (2/22 & 3/1/99): Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square. . . . **OCTOBER SKY** (2/22 & 3/1/99): Beekman, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and 34th Street Showplace. . . . **OFFICE SPACE:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, and 64th and 2nd. . . . **THE OTHER SISTER:** Chelsea West, Cinema II, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **PAYBACK** (2/15/99): Astor Plaza, 84th Street Sixplex, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **THE RAGE: CARRIE 2:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, and Union Square. . . . **RUSHMORE** (12/7-14/98): Guild, Lincoln Square, State, Sutton, and Union Square. . . . **SAVING PRIVATE RYAN** (8/3/98): First & 62nd Cinemas and Union Square. . . . **A SIMPLE PLAN:** Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **SIX WAYS TO SUNDAY:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **TANGO:** BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE THIN RED LINE** (12/28/98 & 1/4/99): BAM Rose Cinemas and Union Square. . . . **20 DATES:** Union Square. . . . **WING COMMANDER:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.



At A.M.M.I., Ernie Gehr's "For Daniel."

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

FILM FORUM 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—A program of films directed by Alfred Hitchcock. March 17: "The Trouble with Harry" (1956). . . . March 18: "Family Plot" (1976). . . . ¶ From March 19: "The Boys in the Band" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films featuring Edward G. Robinson. March 18 at 2:30: "East Is West" (1930, Monta Bell) and "The Hatchet Man" (1932, William Wellman). . . . March 18 at 6 and March 20 at 1: "Key Largo" (1948, John Huston). . . . March 19 at 2:30: "Smart Money" (1931, Alfred E. Green). . . . March 19 at 6 and March 22 at 2:30: "Kid Galahad" (1937, Michael Curtiz). . . . March 19 at 8: "The Sea Wolf" (1941, Curtiz). . . . March 20 at 3: "The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse" (1938, Anatole Litvak). . . . March 20 at 5: "Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Ballet" (1940, William Dieterle). . . . March 21 at 1: "A Slight Case of Murder" (†). . . . March 21 at 3: "House of Strangers" (†). . . . March 21 at 5 and March 23 at 2:30: "Black Tuesday" (1954, Hugh Fregonese). . . . March 22 at 6: "Two Weeks in Another Town" (1962, Vincente Minnelli). . . . March 23 at 6: "The Cincinnati Kid" (1965, Norman Jewison). . . . ¶ March 18 at 6; March 19 at 6 and 8; March 20 at 1, 3, and 5:30; March 21 at 1, 3:30, and 5:30; and March 22 at 6: Seven different programs in a series of British documentary short films. . . . ¶ March 18 at 6: "The Offenders" (1979, Beth and Scott B.).

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of new films from France; in French, with English subtitles. March 17 at 2 and 6:30: "The Ice Rink" (Jean-Philippe Toussaint). . . . March 17 at 4 and 8:30 and March 20 at 6:40: "Place Vendôme" (Nicole Garcia). . . . March 18 at 2 and 6:45 and March 21 at 6:45: "Those Who Love Me Can Take the Train" (Patrice Chéreau). . . . March 18 at 4:30 and 9:20 and March 20 at 4:30: "The Octopus" (Guillaume Nicloux). . . . March 19 at 2 and 6:40 and March 21 at 9:20: "Romance" (Catherine Breillat). . . . March 19 at 4:15 and 9:20 and March 20 at 2: "For Sale" (Laëtitia Masson). . . . March 20 at 9:20 and March 21 at 4:30: "Venus Institute" (Tonie Marshall). . . . ¶ March 22 at 2 and 6:15: "In a Lonely Place" (1950, Nicholas Ray). . . . ¶ March 22 at 4 and 8:15: "On Dangerous Ground" (1952, Ray).

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—March 20-21 at 2 and 4: Four different programs of mostly short films by Ernie Gehr, including "For Daniel," showing March 21 at 4.

FLORENCE GOULD HALL, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—March 22-27: A program of films from Senegal.

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On March 21 at 7, the feature will be "The Devil Is a Woman" (†).

CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—A program of seven films about the last days of the millennium, by seven different directors. Through March 18: "The Hole" (Tsai Ming Liang; Taiwan), "The Wall" (Alain Berliner; Belgium), and "The First Night of My Life" (Miguel Albaladejo; Spain). . . . From March 19: "The Book of Life" (Hal Hartley; United States), "The Sanguinaires" (Laurent Cantet; France), "Life on Earth" (Abderrahmane Sissako; Mali), and "Tamas et Juli" (Ildiko Enyedi; Hungary).

JAPAN SOCIETY, 333 E. 47th St. (752-3015)—A retrospective of films by Tai Kato; in Japanese, with English subtitles. March 19 at 6:30: "Red Peony Gambler: Flower Cards Match" (1969).

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

ANGELIKA FILM CENTER, 18 W. Houston St.
ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM ROSE CINEMAS, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
BEEKMAN, Second Ave. at 66th St.
CHELSEA CINEMAS, 260 W. 23rd St.
CHELSEA WEST, 333 W. 23rd St.
CINEMA I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA 3RD AVENUE, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
CORONET CINEMAS, Third Ave. at 59th St.
CRITERION CENTER, Broadway at 44th St.
EAST 85TH STREET, First Ave. at 85th St.
EASTSIDE PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84TH STREET SIXPLEX, Broadway at 84th St.
86TH STREET EAST TWIN, Third Ave. at 86th St.
59TH STREET EAST CINEMA, 239 E. 59th St.
FILM FORUM, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS, 400 E. 62nd St.
GOTHAM CINEMA, Third Ave. at 58th St.
GUILD, 33 W. 50th St.
LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS, Broadway at 63rd St.
LINCOLN SQUARE, Broadway at 68th St.
METRO CINEMA I AND 2, Broadway at 99th St.
MURRAY HILL CINEMAS, 160 E. 34th St.
NEW YORK TWIN, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19TH STREET EAST 6, Broadway at 19th St.
OLYMPIA I AND II, Broadway at 107th St.
ORPHEUM VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
PARIS, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS, 125 E. 86th St.
QUAD CINEMA, 34 W. 13th St.
THE SCREENING ROOM, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd St.
64TH AND 2ND, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72ND STREET EAST, Third Ave. at 71st St.
STATE, Broadway at 45th St.
SUTTON I AND 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34TH STREET SHOWPLACE, 238 E. 34th St.
UNION SQUARE, Broadway at 13th St.
VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, Second Ave. at 12th St.
VILLAGE THEATRE VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
WAVERLY I AND 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
WORLDWIDE CINEMAS, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
ZIEGFELD, 141 W. 54th St.

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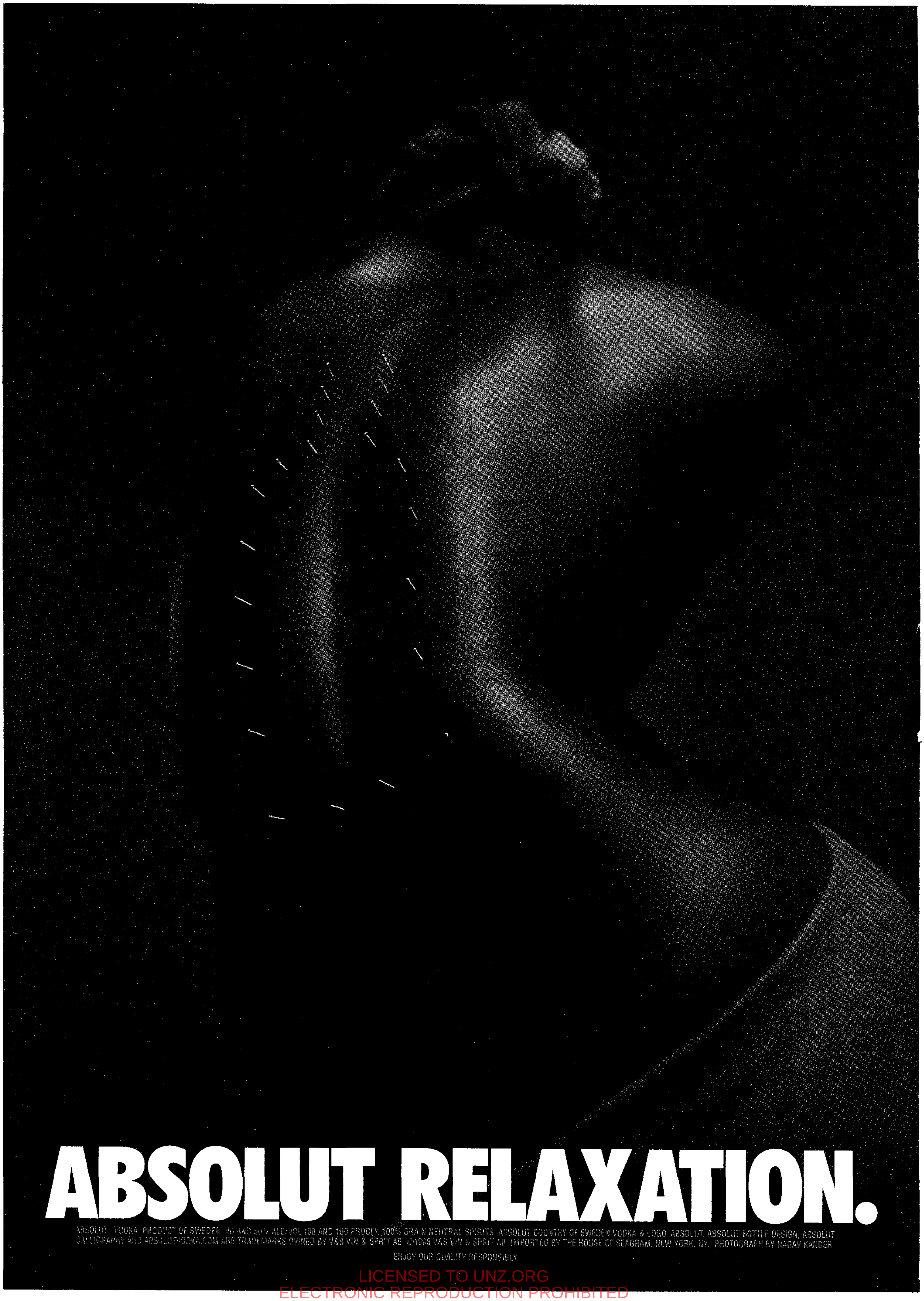
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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

Baseball's quiet man.

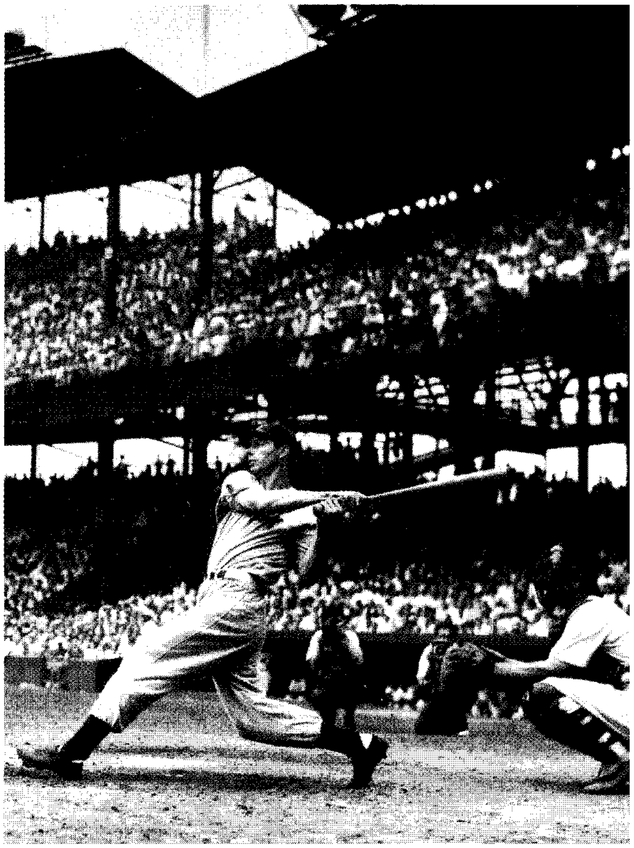
JOE DIMAGGIO, who died last week at the age of eighty-four, managed a suave departure—hardly a glance in our direction before ducking into the dugout—exactly as we fans had expected. Back in December, when he fell into a coma after surgery for lung cancer, his condition became the subject of daily bulletins from his doctors and extended sad speculations in the media; then he got a bit better, just well enough to shut down the news conferences and headlines for good, and to step back into the privacy that he relished and understood so well. He went home again to Hollywood, Florida—there was nothing more the doctors could do for him—and during the next few weeks I noticed that I had begun to see him again with clarity, and that he had become young in memory. One morning last month, I had a nano-flashback to the reposeful tilt of his body and distinctive little head-bobble that had always accompanied his arrival at second base after another standup double. These private scenes became a commonplace for most of his old fans, I imagine, while Joe stayed on, longer than anyone had thought he would. He was always a tough out.

The famous sports photograph on this page has captured him in a prototypical moment—his legs spread wide, his shoulders and upper frame violently torquing, his hands turning to finish the swing, and the ball (look at his eyes!) already well along in its line-drive departure toward right-center field. Which should come as no surprise: in 1941, the year of the photograph, DiMaggio struck out thirteen times in five hundred and forty-one official trips to the plate.

There is more. Despite the massive cut, which has fused DiMaggio's body and bat into a single line of force, he is at rest here: his posture erect and balanced, his demeanor calm. No post-swing lurching or staggering will follow, and certainly no fist-pumpings or pauses for self-congratulation if the hit should turn out to be something special. Joe has been himself, as always, which is to say that he's made baseball look easy, which it is not and never was. No one else brought such presence and quiet command to the hard parts of the game, or is remembered by all who saw him play as being engaged in a private vision of his work that was offered daily for our pleasure. DiMaggio was the classic player of our century.

Joe D. batted a lifetime .325, played in ten World Series, won three Most Valuable Player Awards, and at his death still held title to an unmatched achievement—his fifty-six-consecutive-game batting streak, in 1941—but a stranger feat, I think, was his genius for personification. Arriving at Yankee Stadium in 1936, as a shy twenty-one-year-old rookie from San Francisco, he took over in center field and as the number-three batter in the order, at a moment when the Yankees were embarking on their imperial years—twenty-two pennants in the next twenty-nine seasons—and for as long as he was there his style and theirs could not be separated: lofty, implacable, undemonstrative champions. When he departed, after 1951, the Yanks became Mickey Mantle's club (and then George Steinbrenner's), just as they had been the Babe Ruth Yankees before he came.

The DiMaggio batting streak was an encapsulation, too, and now that Mark McGwire has erased the ancient Roger Maris home-run record it stands undisputed as the primo batting number in the sport. Players know that the two toughest things in baseball are hitting the ball and having



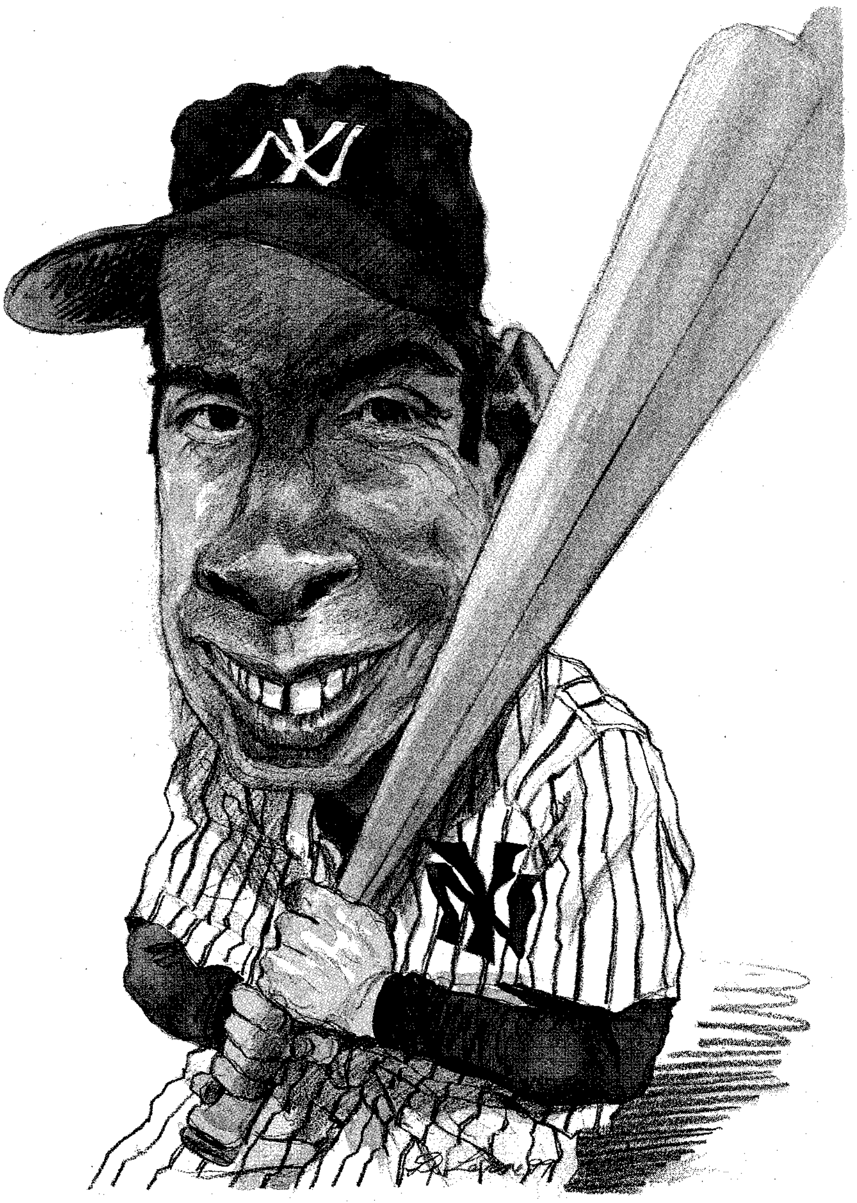
Joe DiMaggio during his famous batting streak of 1941.

UPI/CORBIS BETTMANN

to play every day. Joe D. did both, fifty-six games running. After the Cleveland pitchers Jim Bagby and Al Smith blanked him at last, on July 17, 1941, he tacked on another sixteen, thereby taking care of the notion that luck had played much of a part in the skein. (He had previously knocked off a sixty-one-consecutive-game hitting streak for the San Francisco Seals, at the age of eighteen.) The next nearest aspirants to the record—out of all big-league batters, ever—are Pete Rose and Willie Keeler, who were both stopped at forty-four.

I saw Joe play (and hit) in two or three games during the streak, and though I was entranced by the cumulative feat—a brilliant theatrical run held over day after day, so it seemed, by still another glowing review—I don't believe I gave it much thought once it was done. Almost no one did: we had no *idea*. Records were made to be broken, and soon somebody would come along and break this one, too. It could still happen, of course, but now I'm convinced that it never will, if only because contemporary batters must face so many different pitchers and kinds of pitches in the course of each game. DiMadge, in any case, batted .408 over the distance, surviving with a critical lone hit in thirty-five of the games. On June 28th, with the string at thirty-nine games, while he was batting against the Athletics' Johnny Babich, a right-hander who had vowed not to give him anything to swing at, Joe saw three wide pitches go by, checked with his manager to make sure he had the green light, and lined the next pitch, also well off the plate, between Babich's legs for a single. "I looked over from first base," Joe said afterward, "and his face was as white as a sheet."

DiMaggio made fielding look effortless, too—he ran with long, reaching strides and with apparent foreknowledge of the ball's point of arrival. "You never saw him make a great play," his first manager, Joe McCarthy, said, in ultimate compliment. Comparing him with Willie Mays—whose exploits in center field for the Giants were beginning just when Joe was about to step down—was a parable of baseball opposites. Boyish and electric, Willie chased after the ball in a flurry of eagerness—his cap flying, his legs a blur across the grass—and often captured it with an impossible-looking last-second stretch or dive, or else with that disdainful, kiddish basket catch, down below his waist. Watching Willie, you gasped and laughed; watching Joe, you fell silent, at least for the moment, because he had abolished distance and risk. Then you yelled.



DAVID LEVINE

But enough of this: we shouldn't be deceived. None of it was as calm and gliding as he made it look. DiMaggio, in fact, had a career that was tortured by injuries and ailments—bone spurs, ulcers, a damaged knee, and pneumonia. Yankee fans were forever sitting out some new ache or affliction with him (he was pale in the latest clubhouse photographs, puffing on a cigarette), and worrying how the Yanks would fare without him. In 1949, the team was hard pressed by Ted Williams' Red Sox while Joe missed the first sixty-five games of the season with an inflamed heel. When he returned, just in time for a late-June series at Fenway Park, he hit four home runs in three games, keeping the Bombers on track to another pennant and World Championship. Two years later, despite the pleadings of the Yankee front office, he left the game for good, at the age of thirty-seven, after a .263 season. "That isn't Joe DiMaggio," he said, and he was gone.

DIMAGGIO'S hauteur on the field was especially appropriate to his early years at the stadium, in an era when ballplayers were seen in action only by dint of a trip to the park, and heard, as it were, only through quotes in the sports pages. This void, which seems inconceivable today, served to

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sharpen fans' attention, and while some stars established vivid personalities on the field—Lefty Gomez was lighthearted, Ted Williams juvenile and impetuous—DiMaggio, whose gaze was averted and manner diffident to offish, wanted us to notice only how he played. I was a fifteen-year-old New York kid, and already a hardened Giants fan, when Joe joined the Yankees, but this unspoken compact attracted me. He became my guy—the first star player I knew all about even before his arrival (he batted .398 in 1935, his last season with the Seals); the first name I sought out in the box scores every day; and, it turned out, the first player I watched throughout that accelerated little lifetime on the field, from rookie birth to death by retirement, that every athlete enacts for us.

DiMaggio missed three seasons while he was in military service, and in 1944, by chance of war, he and I were sergeants in the same outfit in Hawaii, where I was an editor with a G.I. magazine and he was playing baseball, full time, on the Seventh Air Force team. It was a treat to watch him play from up close, but the space between us remained unbroken. I was almost relieved that I never glimpsed him around the barracks at Hickam Field or lined up on payday. We didn't demand personal attention from our sports heroes in those times, or yearn for the diminishments of familiarity. When peacetime came, and Joe D. went back to the Yankees, I followed him as before, often by television. I was in the stands at the stadium on October 10, 1951, for the sixth game of a Giants-Yankees World Series, when DiMaggio stepped up to bat in the eighth, with the Yanks on the brink of another championship, and it came to me without warning that this might be my last view of him at the plate. He had made no announcement, but other fans who were there that day have told me that they, too, had the same presentiment. He lined a Larry Jansen pitch to the foot of the right-center-field fence and pulled effortlessly into second base, where he stood at ease amid our tumultuous cheering, with his eyes cast down.

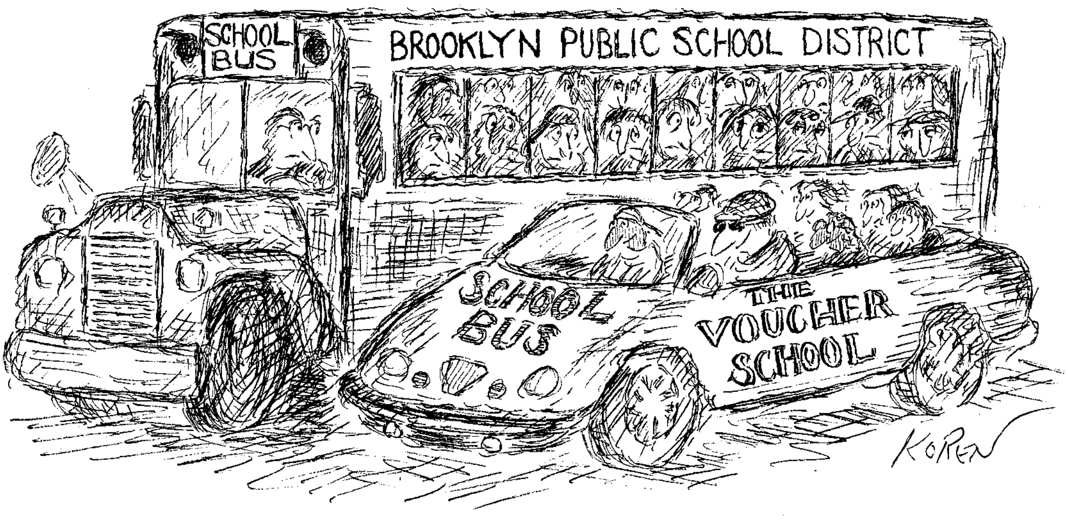
No one else kept his fame in quite the way Joe did. His parents were Italian-born immigrants (his father was a crab fisherman), which meant, of course, that his immense success at the most indigenous of sports gave him special status with Americans of foreign descent, but Joe never traded on that, or cashed in grossly on his sports image. Class was his line. Through an almost unimaginably long retirement, including his celebrated nine-month marriage to Marilyn Monroe, his commercial-television appearances as a spokesman for the Bowery Bank and Mr. Coffee, and all those ritual walk-ons at Yankee Stadium, for Opening Day or Old Timers' Day, he sustained this elegant remoteness. Neither reclusive nor gregarious, he found intimates who were instinctively his protectors as well; headwaiters and clubhouse attendants and columnists became a papal Swiss Guard. For years, his closest friend was a New York ticket broker named Georgie Solotaire. In 1983, when Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip visited San Francisco aboard the royal yacht, DiMadge was in the coveted lineup of celebrities invited to meet them. When he was announced, and stepped forward, the Prince appeared to pause before they shook hands. "*The* Joe DiMaggio?" he asked. I met Joe D., too, a few times; we talked a little baseball and cut up touches about Hickam Field, but I didn't want anything more from him than what I had. He was frail at the end and still shy, dignified in dark suits and a silk tie—an American noble.

Let's go back to the photograph, which was taken at Washington's Griffith Stadium on June 29, 1941, when the Yanks and the Senators played a doubleheader, with DiMaggio collecting a hit in each game, to run the streak to forty-two games. I don't know what happened to the line drive, but never mind. —ROGER ANGELL

THE PICTURES

Memoirs of a Kubrick mind slave.

FOR nearly two decades, Stanley Kubrick was intermittently obsessed with developing a science-fiction movie from a short story by Brian Aldiss called "Super-Toys Last All Summer Long." It was about the adventures of a robot toddler who yearns to be a real boy and his interactive Teddy bear. Stanley gave the project the working title of "A.I."—for "artificial intelligence"—and amplified the story to include global warming and the flooding of New York City. In 1990, after reading some of my science-fiction stories, Stanley summoned me to his vast manor house, outside St. Albans, twenty miles north of London, to help him get his ideas down on paper.



Stanley was living in enigmatic seclusion. It had been three years since the release of "Full Metal Jacket" and the last interview he was ever to give. He rarely set foot off his estate; even Vietnam had had to come to him, in the form of a jungle of imported Spanish palm trees that he had set up in a derelict East London gasworks for a scene in "Full Metal

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Jacket." ("Do you know what the essence of moviemaking is?" Stanley once asked me. "It's *buying lots of things*.")

It didn't take long for me to fall into Stanley's routine. My presence at the mansion would be announced by walkie-talkie. (Since the house was so large, Stanley found it expedient to communicate with his staff this way.) Invariably dressed in baggy trousers, a jacket with lots of pockets that bulged with pens, and tatty old jogging shoes, Stanley would appear and lead me into the kitchen, where he would make lunch. He liked to eat the same meal day after day until he tired of it. A few weeks of Chinese takeout were followed by an era of vegetarian food cooked by private chefs. After that, it was salmon steaks, which Stanley himself poached in milk in the microwave—a preparation of which he was very proud.

Next stop: the billiard room, where Stanley and I held our story conferences. These sessions were like constructing a castle of wooden blocks which was often doomed to collapse toward the end of the afternoon, just as I was hoping to make my departure with some definite scenes to write up. Stanley never knew exactly what he was after, though he was remorseless at finding a hairline crack in a scene which, under his scrutiny, would rapidly widen into an uncrossable chasm.

Stanley was an excellent host—after I assured him that I required beer to think properly, he never failed to provide it—but his professional demands could be draining. One of his pithier castigations was "It's like you're writing a B-movie for a moron."

Stanley kept several golden retrievers and three cats. One cat lived permanently upstairs in a climate-controlled temperature of eighty degrees, and each day, on Stanley's orders, his Italian chauffeur, Emilio, brought in a trayful of fresh grass for the cat to roll in. The two other cats were confined to a large, sepulchral computer room. Stanley personally replenished their fine-china water bowl with Evian, explaining, "I only want the best for the animals." Emilio told me that during one severe winter Stanley became convinced that the birds on the property were starving, and he took to throwing whole loaves of bread out the window. Soon the grounds were overrun with sparrows too stout to fly.

One day, while we were finishing lunch, I pointed out a bee on the floor. "Will it sting me?" Stanley asked. I rose to inspect the bee. "Don't kill it, Ian!" Stanley said. Gingerly, he maneuvered the bee onto a card and trapped it with a crystal bowl.

"You stay here," he said, taking the bee outside. On his return from the herb garden, he announced, "I found a place for it."

"You know," I said, teasing him, "the nights are frosty."

Stanley frowned and said, "Do you mean the bee might die out there?" He went out and returned with the bee in the bowl. "What do you suppose bees eat?" he asked.

"I think maybe honey," I said.

In the larder, we found a jar of honey, and Stanley spooned a large mound of it onto the card, next to the bee. Then we explored the many unused rooms of the house to find the most hospitable place for the bee to sit out the coming winter on its card. Only after this was sorted out could we get back to the robot boy and his Teddy bear.

I came to see Stanley's caprices as just another form of perfectionism. One day, we were working on a scene set in our flooded New York of the future. I wondered aloud what this fictional disaster might look like from Macy's windows. In an instant, Stanley had a Macy's employee on the phone.

"This is Stanley Kubrick," he said. "I'd like you to go to the window and tell me what you can see."

The person's description wasn't very informative. Hanging up, Stanley grumbled, "They employ retards." He then phoned the New York office of his studio, Warner Bros., and told someone to dispatch a photographer to Macy's, and to send us the pictures by overnight mail. The next day, the photographs arrived, and Stanley examined them for maybe thirty seconds. Two months later, they still lay fanned out on the table where he had left them.

Toward the end of that year, Stanley told me to write up our whole story. "I hope there's some emotion in it, Ian," he said. "Put some vaginal jelly on the words." After it was finished, he declared, "This is one of the world's great stories." My job—for the moment at least—was over.

A year went by. One day, Stanley called to say that he had lost the story. Emilio arrived to pick up a copy.

"What's Stanley been doing for the past year?" I asked.

"Mainly, he's been sitting in a room watching one of the dogs die," Emilio said.

For several years after that, Stanley tinkered with the "A.I." project. I was heartened to hear a rumor that he had agreed to make "Eyes Wide Shut"—which he had reportedly finished editing just before he died, last week, at the age of seventy—only to induce Warner Bros. to finance the realization of his true dream: "A.I." Now, of course, "A.I." will never exist. I shall miss it, and I shall miss Stanley, too. —IAN WATSON

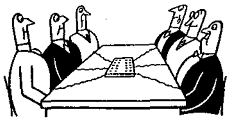
INKLINGS

Inklings sans ink
Cling to the dry
Point of the pen
Whose stem I mouth
Not knowing when
The truth will out

—SAMUEL MENASHE

ON THE AIR

NBC plays footsie with Sony.



When Bob Wright, NBC's president and C.E.O., hired Tom Rogers to be his chief strategist and in-house futurist in 1987, many of his colleagues reacted with alarm. Rogers, who had previously been senior counsel to the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Consumer Protection and Finance, was widely thought to hold the network business in some contempt.

Indeed, the mission that Wright gave him was to fatten a business that they both viewed as extremely limited, because networks have traditionally depended on a single source of revenue—

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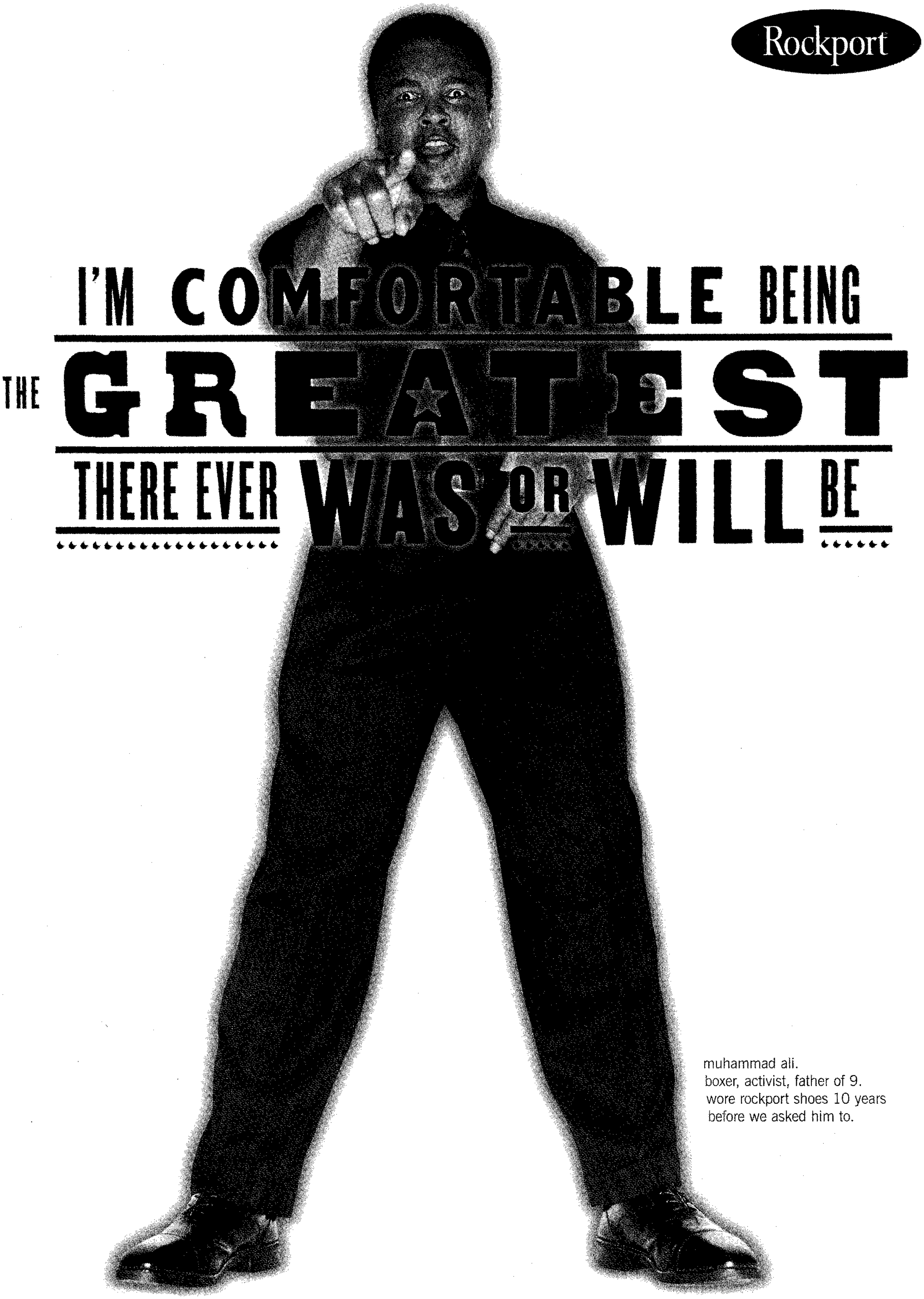
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"Is there a letter 't'?"

• •

advertising. Rogers, who is NBC's executive vice-president and president of cable operations, is an intense man of forty-four, with a deep radio-announcer's voice and the year-round pallor of someone who spends his days in conference rooms or on airplanes. His first major move at NBC was to acquire the Financial News Network and combine it with NBC's fledgling cable channel, CNBC. This year, according to a senior NBC official, CNBC will earn about two hundred million dollars—more than the combined profits last year of the ABC, Fox, and CBS networks.

With Rogers as Wright's point man, NBC continued to diversify by expanding its meagre cable-programming assets, which now include part ownership in twenty channels, among them A&E, the History Channel, Bravo, American Movie Classics, the MSG Network, and, as of last week, Value Vision. As a gauge of NBC's transformation, Wright says, the company's pretax profits in 1998 were a billion two hundred million dollars and will be about the same this year. In 1999, just a quarter of those profits will be generated by the network itself.

At first, many NBC executives were appalled by what Wright and Rogers were doing; the diversion of resources to other media, the executives thought, was sabotaging the network. But what Wright and Rogers had shrewdly realized was that the network was like a trampoline—in Rogers's words, a vehicle "to create new assets, new businesses," which might bring order to a chaos of Internet choices and, in turn, please advertisers by creating stronger brand recognition.

Still, Rogers and Wright's investments were relatively inexpensive, and so their deft acquisitions were not perceived as particularly bold. That could change, however, because NBC is now engaged in secret negotiations with the Sony Corporation—a state of affairs that might make NBC's partner, Microsoft, anxious. One meeting in Tokyo in February was attended by Sony's president and co-C.E.O., Nobuyuki Idei, and NBC's C.E.O., Wright, along with Rogers, Howard Stringer, the chairman and C.E.O. of Sony's American operations, and a small cohort of associates. For NBC, a deal with Sony would offer a Hollywood studio that produces TV shows and movies, plus a music company, digital expertise, and the world's foremost consumer-electronics brand name. According to four NBC executives, one possibility that Wright and Rogers are discussing is a joint partnership that would allow NBC to oversee Sony's West Coast movie and television studios and give Sony the broadcast, cable, and Internet-distribution systems it lacks. "I see an artful transaction with Sony," a rival Hollywood executive says. "The problem is engineering." More precisely, how to engineer a deal without diluting the earnings of G.E., NBC's parent company. Wright has acknowledged that G.E. might consider spinning off part of NBC—selling shares to the public—if the deal was "an attractive proposition for the G.E. shareholders." On being asked for an example of how the new partnership might function, an executive close to the talks suggested that the potential revenues could be enormous if Sony, as NBC's partner, could bypass movie theatres and video stores and offer first-run movies to homes on a pay-per-view basis.

Although it's not always evident, in twelve years at NBC Tom Rogers has learned humility. He knows that the Hollywood studios guessed wrong in the fifties when they sneered at the nascent network-television industry that they might have owned. And he knows that the networks guessed wrong in the seventies when they snubbed the cable industry. But when this generation of new media disdained the old media (such as the networks) as "dinosaurs" they guessed wrong, too, as Rogers and Wright did when they disparaged the low profit margins of their network before they began to take advantage of the varied opportunities that NBC offered. As Rogers puts it, "You never know who's swimming naked until the tide goes out." —KEN AULETTA

SCOTS VALLEY PUB-HERALD JANUARY 15, 1999 5

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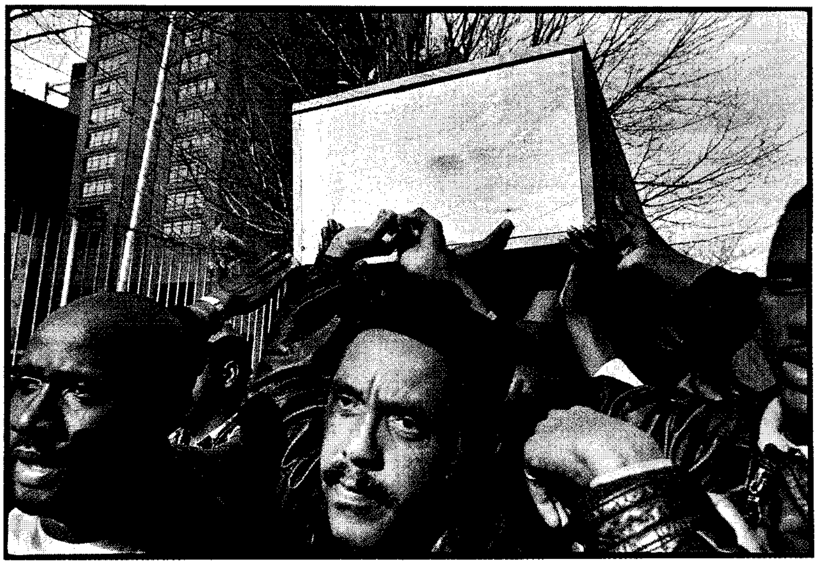
AROUND CITY HALL

THE PERILS OF SAFETY

Did crime-fighting tactics put Amadou Diallo at risk?

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT



Diallo's New York memorial service. Photograph by Gilles Peress.

MAGNUM

EVERY day in New York City, some nineteen people, on average, file official grievances against the police with the Civilian Complaint Review Board. Their complaints range from charges of verbal abuse to allegations of illegal searches, use of excessive force, and outright physical assault. And every year the city pays out more than twenty million dollars in compensation for this sort of claim. These encounters may be degrading, sometimes even permanently debilitating, but it is rare for one of them to be degrading or debilitating enough to enter the public discourse. As with crime itself, police misconduct has to be abnormal, even outrageous, before it can be tagged as emblematic.

Nineteen months ago, a Haitian immigrant named Abner Louima was picked up after a scuffle outside a Brooklyn night club, taken back to the Seventieth Precinct station, and brutalized so badly that he ended up at Coney Island Hospital in critical condition. As news stories later recounted, Louima had no previous criminal record and had actually been trying to break up a brawl when the police arrived. Even more important to the impact of the story, however, were the grotesque terms of his abuse. Four officers are alleged to have participated at various points, one of them using a wooden stick to sodomize Louima, puncturing his intestines.

When Amadou Diallo was shot, last month, it was again the scale of the violence that turned his death from a private to a civic tragedy. Unarmed and standing alone in the vestibule of his Bronx apartment building, Diallo was shot by four policemen, who fired a total of forty-one bullets, nineteen of which penetrated his body. At the time of the shooting, the officers could not have been standing more than twenty feet away from him.

At the many marches and rallies and protests and press conferences that have been held since Diallo was killed, his case and Louima's have been almost reflexively linked, and for obvious reasons. Both are about police brutality and, more specifically, about the intersection between police brutality and race: the attack on a black man by white cops. Citing concerns about both cases, the United States Commission on Civil Rights announced recently that it would be conducting a broad inquiry this spring into the city's police practices. As a grand jury pursues its investigation of Diallo's death in the Bronx and the trial of the officers accused of beating Louima gets under way in Brooklyn, it seems inevitable that the two will continue to be regarded as symptoms of the same disease.

Linking Louima's beating and Diallo's slaying is rhetorically useful; it makes it that much more difficult for Mayor Rudolph Giuliani or for his police commissioner, Howard Safir, to argue, as the official response to such horrors so often runs, that these are mere "isolated incidents." But, to the extent that the two sensational cases exemplify anything, treating them as the same obscures the meaning of both. Everything we know so far about the attack on Louima suggests that it represents a case of racism in its most familiar—and easily condemned—form. The killing of Diallo, by contrast, seems to be emblematic of something new: a form of racial bias that is statistically driven and officially sanctioned and that, depending on your perspective, may or may not be racism at all.

OVER the last several years, as crime in New York City has dropped, the most impressive, and also the most reliable, figure has been the city's falling murder rate, and the most important component of that figure has been the decline in the number of people killed with guns. According to Police Department records, gun murders in the city were the highest they had ever been in 1991—one thousand six hundred and five. Last year, that figure was down to three hundred and seventy-five, a decline of almost seventy-seven per cent. Over that same period, the number of murders committed by other means also fell, but less rapidly, from five hundred and forty-four to two hundred and fifty-four, or, roughly, fifty-three per cent.

Getting guns off the street has been one of the N.Y.P.D.'s top priorities ever since Mayor Giuliani took office and hired his first police commissioner, William Bratton. Yet almost as soon as the department began to search more aggressively for handguns, the number of gun arrests actually began to go down. This development clearly complicated the department's claims of success, and there are some people who point to it as evidence that the city's falling crime rate—and, indeed, the entire country's—has had relatively little to do with police tactics. Nevertheless, the N.Y.P.D. wisely took credit for it, arguing that it was proof that the owners of illegal guns, increasingly fearful of arrest, were now leaving them at home. An unlicensed handgun left in a drawer is, to be sure, still an unlicensed handgun, but one that is that much less likely to be used to commit a crime.

The department's tactics were never particularly subtle, or even, many would argue, very new. Quite simply, the police increased the number of people they stopped and frisked for weapons, often using minor violations such as fare-beating, public beer-drinking, and loud radio-playing as pretexts for a pat-down. In 1995, the department proudly told the *Times* that the number of frisks in one precinct, the Thirtieth, in northwest Harlem, had increased by a hundred and fifty per cent in just one year.

The campaign against illegal handguns was in keeping with the new emphasis that Giuliani and Bratton placed on preventing, rather than just reacting to, crime. But it put the cops in an ambiguous relationship with the people they were supposed to be protecting: virtually everyone became a potential suspect. Bratton, who has been widely quoted since Diallo's death as advocating a reassessment of some of the very policies he pioneered, told me recently that the department always "clearly understood" that the focus on seizing illegal guns was going to increase the number of "negative encounters" between cops and civilians. "We weren't born yesterday," he added.

Spotting an illegal weapon, as opposed to just taking one off a fare beater, is a skill, and one that, according to those practiced in it, is so subtle that it requires something very close to innate ability. Where the inexperienced eye would see nothing at all amiss, those who have the skill can guess from someone's gait (slightly off balance) or his gestures (perhaps he unconsciously pats his pocket as he jogs across the street) or the hang of his clothes (is one side of his jacket ever so slightly lower than the other?) that he is carrying a gun. There are even plenty of cops who are otherwise perfectly

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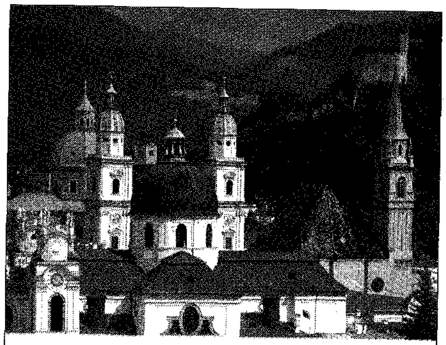

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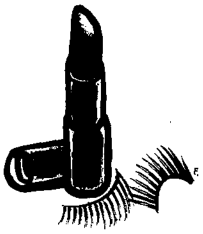
competent but will never be able to detect a concealed gun; they simply do not, in police parlance, "have the eyes."

In the N.Y.P.D.'s battle against illegal handguns, one section of the department has played a starring role, and that is the élite Street Crimes Unit. In the mid-nineties, Street Crimes members constituted roughly half a per cent of the force but purportedly made twenty per cent of all gun arrests. A few years ago, the Street Crimes Unit was expanded greatly, against the recommendation of its then commander, Richard Savage. Too much growth, Savage argued, would threaten the group's cohesiveness and its selectivity. After expressing his concern, Savage was promoted out of his post. Currently, the unit's members constitute about one per cent of the police force and, according to the department, make forty per cent of all gun arrests. Although the N.Y.P.D. has declined to reveal the racial makeup of the special unit, it is almost certainly even less diverse than the department as a whole, which remains almost seventy per cent white.

The members of Street Crimes are not assigned to any particular precinct. Instead, they are dispatched to those neighborhoods where, according to the very latest statistics, crime is running highest. The four cops who approached Diallo on the night of February 4th were all members of Street Crimes. Diallo, a street peddler who sold an assortment of CDs and videotapes, had come home from work at about midnight and, his roommates later told reporters, was heading out again to get something to eat when the police arrived. At this point, it is impossible to know what provoked them to start firing: the officers have said nothing publicly about the incident, and have not yet spoken to the grand jury. On that night, they were searching for a serial rapist responsible for some forty-five attacks since 1993, and Diallo, according to another cop who had looked for this rapist, could be described as a "rough match" with a police sketch. A lawyer for the police union, who is representing one of the cops, has said that the four thought that Diallo had a gun.

The Street Crimes Unit, understandably, has come under a great deal of scrutiny since the slaying, and its motto, "We own the night," which is supposed to celebrate its part in making the city's streets safe to walk on after dark, has been interpreted by critics as a bald declaration of aggression. In defense of Street Crimes, officials of the N.Y.P.D. have pointed to its impressive record of seizing illegal guns. They have also released for the first time figures indicating the extent of the unit's efforts. In 1997 and 1998, its members performed forty-five thousand and eighty-four frisks.



In the abstract, there is nothing racially biased about the Street Crimes mission, or about the fact that its members have patted down so many people—or, indeed, about the department-wide emphasis on performing frisks at the slightest provocation. In reality, however, both critics and defenders of the force agree, these practices have resulted in thousands upon thousands of young black and Latino men getting searched for weapons—or, as the cops would say, "tossed." As Savage, who has now retired, pointed out to me recently, "In the precincts that we worked in, it would be difficult to *find* a white guy."

DIALLO died where he was shot, in front of 1157 Wheeler Avenue, a brick row house in the Soundview section of the Bronx. When I visited the building recently, the front door, which is painted red, was propped open, as it must have been on the night of the killing, and several bullet holes were clearly visible in its side. In the vestibule, there were gashes in the walls, where bullets had apparently torn into the plaster, and through the diamond-shaped window of a second door I could make out still more holes in the walls of the hallway.

Since Diallo's death, the building has become a shrine, with buckets of wilted flowers sitting out front and messages of anger and condolence lining the entryway. A poem addressed to the cops and attached by duct tape to the brick façade read, in part:

When you look at me what do you see
Am I innocent until proven guilty
Am I your enemy
Or were you sent here to protect me

Hanging next to the poem, a Teddy bear wrapped in plastic clutched a box

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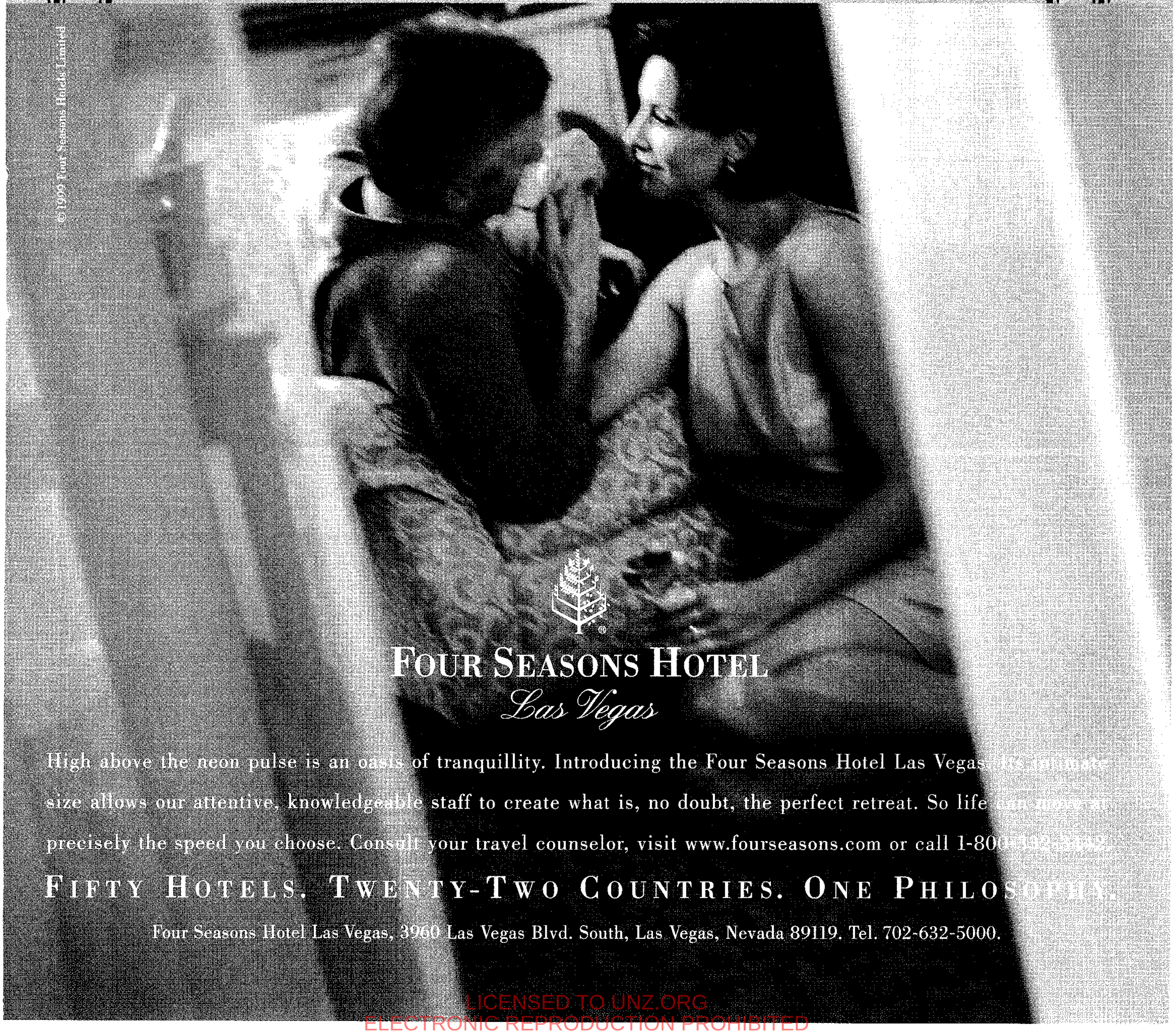

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of Valentine's candy. In the thirty minutes or so that I stood in front of the building, taking notes, I spoke with half a dozen people who told me that they had come expressly to contemplate the spot where Diallo had been killed. "I wanted to come and see for myself what it looked like," one of them said. An elegantly dressed woman wearing a fur hat stopped by and silently added a fresh bouquet to a bucket.

I made my visit in the company of Francisco Gonzalez, the district manager for the local community board, who over the last few weeks has become a de-facto spokesman for the surrounding neighborhoods. A short, stocky man who was once an Army chaplain's assistant, Gonzalez grew up in the nineteen-sixties in the South Bronx, or, as he refers to it, Fort Apache. He sees nothing inherently wrong with the N.Y.P.D.'s current approach. On Elder Avenue, just a block away from Diallo's apartment, Gonzalez pointed out to me a stack of blue N.Y.P.D. trestles. They had been used, he said, to close off the street as part of a campaign to drive out drug dealers, a campaign that he felt had been largely successful.

"I got to tell you, Giuliani has the right idea in terms of how to address crime," he told me. He said he thought his views were generally shared by his neighbors. "If you speak to the average Joe, he'll say, 'I'm really happy. At 9 P.M., I can go to the bodega and buy some milk.' "

At the same time, Gonzalez said, he had heard a lot of complaints in the last few years about overaggressive policing. Just among the local officials that he dealt with, he knew of several instances of people stopped and questioned for no apparent reason other than the way they looked. In one case, it was a community-board member's visiting his son-in-law. "He happens to be white," Gonzalez said. "They assumed he was doing drugs."

Even the local State Assemblyman, Ruben Diaz, Jr., has a story of being stopped. Shortly after his election in 1996, Diaz, then just twenty-four, was driving through his district with a couple of his friends when he was pulled over. Diaz's pockets were patted, and a friend was frisked. It was clear that the officers suspected that his car, a 1994 Toyota Camry, which had Assembly plates, had been stolen. "I hate to be racial," Diaz said, with the restraint of a much older politician, "but I don't think a white twenty-four-year-old would have been asked to get out of that car."

IN order to "toss" someone, a police officer must reasonably suspect that the person is armed and presents a danger, and he is expected to be able to articulate why he felt that way. This "reasonable suspicion" standard has evolved from a landmark 1968 Supreme Court decision, Terry v. Ohio, and it is significantly lower than the "probable cause" standard that the cops must meet to make an arrest or to obtain a search warrant. Just how much lower has been the subject of much debate and considerable litigation. The courts have consistently held that simply being of a certain race or fitting a certain type or hanging out in a high-crime area does not constitute sufficient grounds for frisking. Making a furtive gesture or having a bulge in your pocket, on the other hand, does.

Although stops based on race are illegal, however, the practice of "racial profiling" by law-enforcement agencies clearly goes on. That it happens on some of the nation's highways, for instance, has been established with something approaching statistical certainty. When researchers studied traffic data for I-95 north of Baltimore, as part of the settlement of a 1993 class-action lawsuit, they found little disparity in the rate at which blacks and whites violated the traffic laws but huge disparities in the rate at which they were pulled over. (Police often use traffic stops as a pretext for gun or narcotics searches.) An expert witness in the case described the odds of this disparity's occurring by chance as "less than one in one quintillion." Similarly, statistics produced in a 1994-95 case of minority drivers arrested for drug or weapons possession on the New

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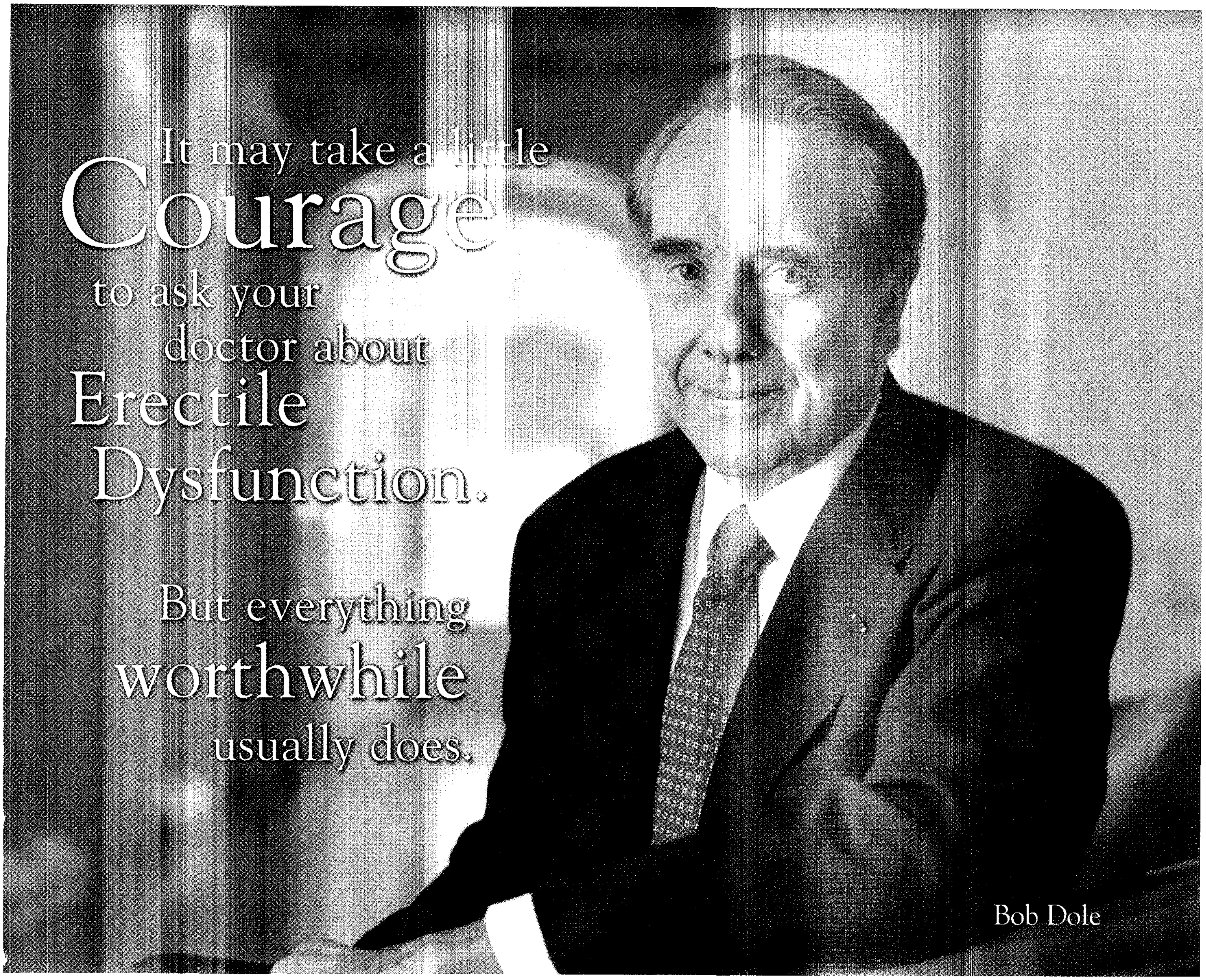

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Now it's up to you to get the treatment you need for E.D. My advice is to get a medical checkup. It's the best way to get educated about E.D. and what can be done to treat it. It may take a little courage, but I've found that everything worthwhile usually does.

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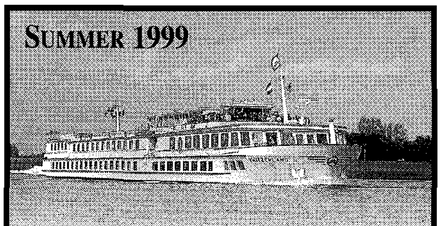

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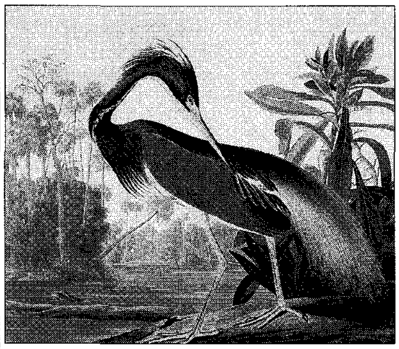

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WAKING UP

Daylight leaks in, and sluggishly I surface
from my own dreams into the common dream
and things assume again their proper places
and their accustomed shapes. Into this present
the Past intrudes, in all its dizzying range—
the centuries-old habits of migration
in birds and men, the armies in their legions
all fallen to the sword, and Rome and Carthage.

The trappings of my day also come back:
my voice, my face, my nervousness, my luck.
If only Death, that other waking up,
would grant me a time free of all memory
of my own name and all that I have been!
If only morning meant oblivion!

—JORGE LUIS BORGES

(*Translated, from the Spanish, by Alastair Reid.*)

Jersey Turnpike showed that on the southern section of the turnpike cars with black occupants represented only fifteen per cent of those violating the speed limit, yet they accounted for forty-six per cent of the drivers pulled over.

The N.Y.P.D. has consistently maintained that it regards racial profiling as anathema. Department officials have said, and ordinary cops confirmed to me, that at the Police Academy new officers are drilled insistently on what does and does not constitute reasonable grounds for a frisk. Members of Street Crimes also receive a copy of the department's training manual, "Street Encounters," which expressly stipulates that if an officer's reason for approaching someone "is a personal prejudice or bias, such as the person's race or hair length, the encounter is unlawful."

Critics of the department argue, though, that what matters is not what the cops are taught, but what actually happens on the street. Just last week, the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights filed a class-action lawsuit against the Street Crimes Unit, accusing it of engaging in racially motivated searches. But measuring bias on the streets of New York is a lot harder than measuring it on a stretch of highway. As the city's corporation counsel, Michael D. Hess, pointed out in response to the announcement of the suit, it would "not be surprising" if a high proportion of those frisked by the Street Crimes Unit were black and Latino, given the neighborhoods the unit has been sent to protect. To fight violent crime most effectively, "you wouldn't send the majority of your people to do stop-and-frisks at Seventy-second Street and Park Avenue," Hess told me. The city's murder statistics "don't lie and cannot be fudged," he has said, which is why, he might have added, some of the questions raised by Diallo's death are so difficult to answer.

If you are a black resident of New York City, your chances of being murdered are at least five times as high as they are if you are white, and the odds that you've been arrested for murder are more than ten times as high. This disparity means that the police will see more behavior by blacks that they will legitimately identify as suspicious. At the same time, it means that they will, almost inevitably, come to see criminal behavior as a black phenomenon, which is not only profoundly unfair but also unlawful. The more aggressive policing becomes—the more the cops try to anticipate crimes before they occur—the more such structural biases are brought out into the open.

Of course, the segregation of crime, by income, by neighborhood, and, especially, by race, is what makes such a strategy politically practical in the first place. Crucial constituencies have little directly to lose from it. The cost of aggressive policing may be a collective erosion of civil rights, but only some groups feel the immediate impact. "Most people are prepared to pay those costs," observed Tracey Maclin, a Boston University law professor who has written extensively about race and the Fourth Amendment, "because, frankly, it is not them." Just three months after the assault on Abner Louima, Mayor Giuliani was resoundingly reëlected—largely, it seemed, because of his record on crime.

Six weeks after Diallo's shooting, it seems much less likely that this latest crisis will dissipate so quickly. Recent polls show that the Mayor's popularity is down roughly thirty points from its high of seventy-four per cent, in February, 1998—a decline that is most pronounced among blacks but that cuts across all racial groups. In the city there is a feeling, which is harder to quantify than mayoral popularity, that the very meaning of New York's drop in crime has shifted.

The difference may be in part that Diallo died. Or it may be that he was shot at so many times, which seems to suggest not only panic and confusion but also terrible fear and hostility. Or it may be that Diallo and Louima together are just more potent, that the repetition has forced New Yorkers to acknowledge a connection that they would have preferred to ignore.

But it may also be that people sense, if only intuitively, the fundamental difference between the two cases. Allegedly, as the cops beat Louima in their squad car on the way to the station and then tortured him inside it, they taunted him with racial epithets. The very explicitness of their racism was something to condemn, but also to take some comfort in: What those cops did to Louima, you could tell yourself, clearly had nothing to do with doing their job. It is much harder to say that about Diallo. ♦

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[*From the Lewiston (Idaho) Morning Tribune*]

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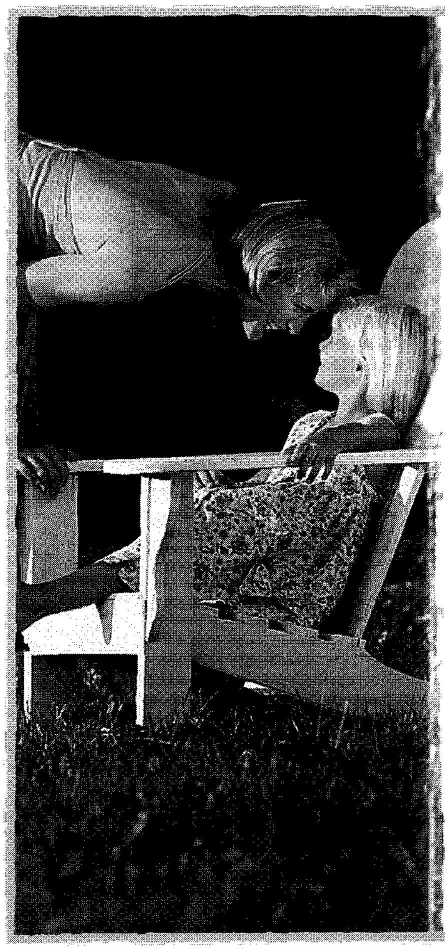

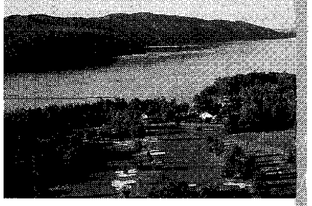

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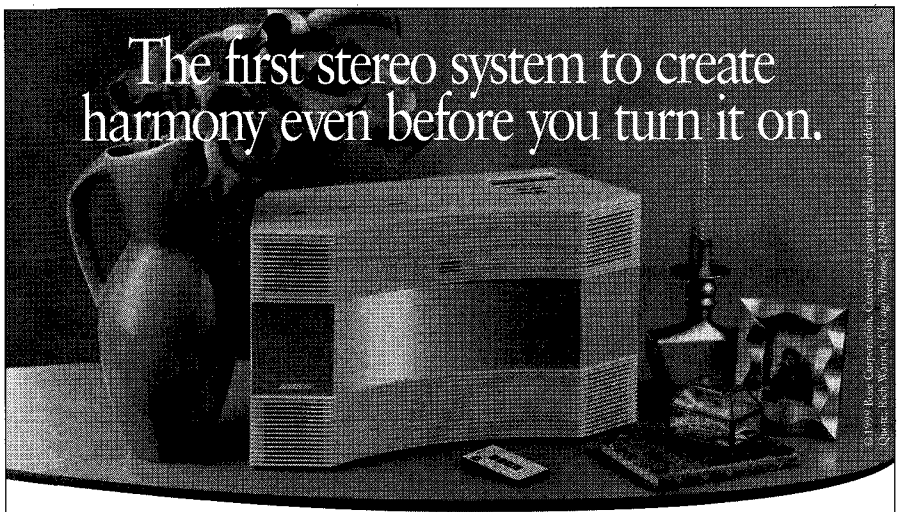
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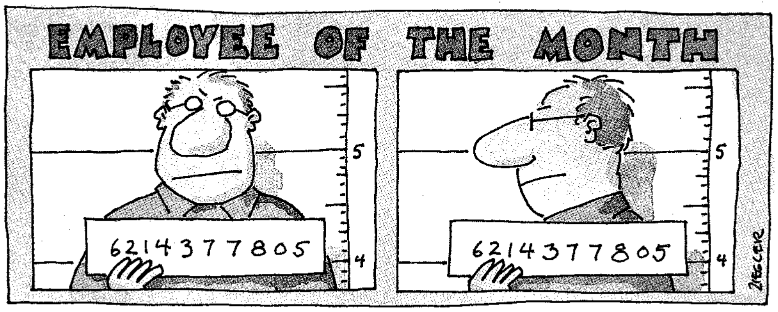
LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

BY KURT LUCHS



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: It is my pleasure to recommend Kurt Luchs for employment at your company. I have known Kurt for nearly six years, and I can honestly say that I have not known any other Kurt for nearly as long.

Kurt was with our firm, Pendleton Tool & Die Co., for five and a half of those years. His employment with us ended amicably and by mutual agreement between both parties and the United States Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. In fact, Kurt was so dedicated that he stopped coming in each morning only when his desk was removed and the locks were changed. Every once in a while, I think I see his face behind a ventilation grille.

During his tenure with us, Kurt held a number of positions reflecting his range of talents and responsibilities: administrative assistant, assistant to the administrator, assistant administrator's aide, administering assistant's associate, and filing clerk. While it would be an exaggeration to say that he performed all his duties, it would be entirely fair to say that he performed them all equally well. In fact, there was a consistency and tone to Kurt's job performance which I have never before seen in a living employee—call it an almost supernatural sense of calm. There were times when only a mirror held to Kurt's nostrils would reveal the fiery spirit and pulsing intellect within.

I credit Kurt entirely for inspiring the recent overhaul of our human-resources department's background-checking system. His knack for creative self-expression, by which he transformed a three-year stretch in a state reformatory into an M.B.A. from Harvard, was a constant source of amusement.

While some people can be described as "all heart" or "all head," the best way to describe Kurt is "all hands." From a friendly pat on the behind to a friendly pat of butter on the chest, he touched his female colleagues in more ways than most of them had ever heard of.

He was close to his male co-workers, too; in fact, on several occasions it took a stun gun to pry them apart. There were a few who had a hard time seeing Kurt's good-natured roughhousing in the proper light. But in my opinion he never crossed the all-important line between first-degree manslaughter and second-degree murder.

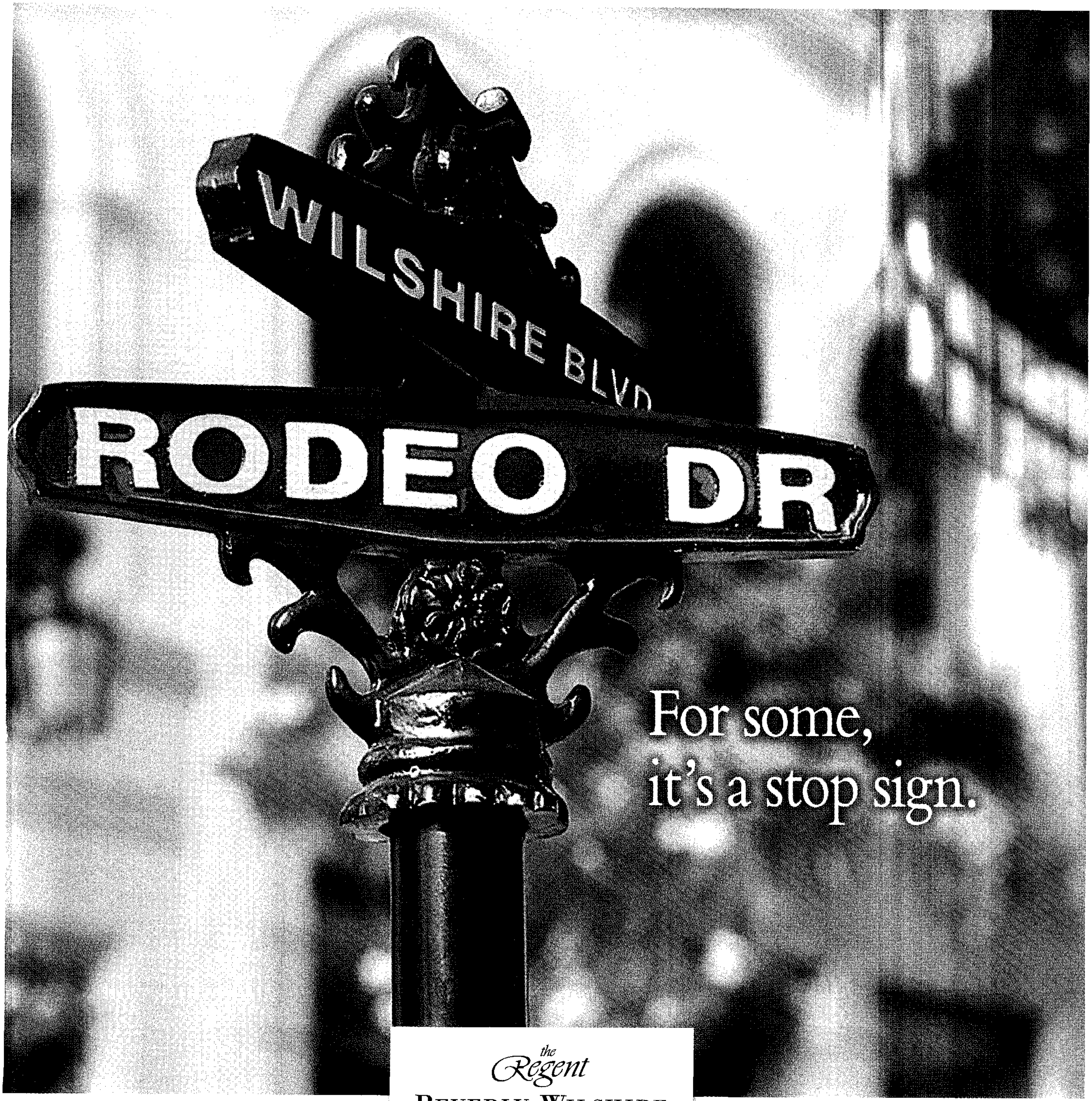
I envy the next company that adds Kurt to its payroll. Why? Because hiring Kurt is like getting a free law-school education. You may think you understand the First Amendment, but I'll bet you had no idea that an employee has the constitutional right to emit sudden, piercing shrieks and deafening bursts of profanity near a fellow-worker operating an industrial laser.

Kurt also displayed an uncommon willingness and ability to follow instructions—not my instructions but, rather, those he received from the voice in his head.

Kurt's influence on everyone in our company was so extensive that there are still employees who won't start their cars without checking under the hood first. You ask how and why Kurt left our company. Unfortunately, a court order prevents me from sharing all the details. But I can say in perfect candor that I heartily recommend Kurt as a resourceful and indefatigable addition to some other firm—any other firm.

Sincerely,
THOMAS R. PENDLETON
President
Pendleton Tool & Die Co. ♦

JACK ZIEGLER



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LIFE AND LETTERS

THAT'S IT, BABY

What happened when Tennessee Williams decided that he would like to publish his fiction.

BY MICHAEL KORDA

GENIUS in one form of the arts seldom extends to the others. I should have remembered this when a dear friend—Billy Barnes, who was an agent at International Creative Management, in New York—suggested over lunch one day in 1972 that I might like to become the publisher of Tennessee Williams's fiction. There is no American playwright whom I admire more than Williams, but that was no guarantee that he could write a novel or short stories of the same quality, or that Simon & Schuster could publish them successfully. Indeed, his previous ventures into fiction had been published by a small press, and hadn't had much impact. In this case, however, my admiration for the author was so great that Barnes did not have to work very hard to get me on the hook. By the time our main course was served, at the Italian Pavilion, I had agreed to publish a novel and a book of stories by Tennessee Williams, with whom Barnes promised me a meeting in the near future.

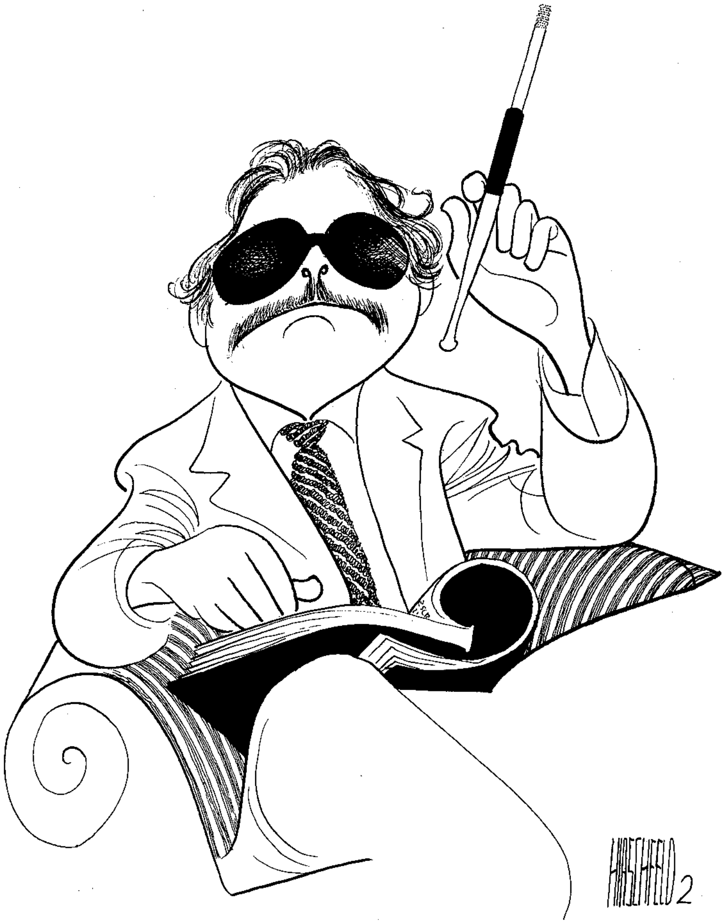
Because Williams was then living at the Hotel Elysée (which he always referred to as the Easy Lay, a name first bestowed upon it by Tallulah Bankhead), on East Fifty-fourth Street, Barnes suggested that we meet at one o'clock at Lutèce, since it was conveniently close. Besides, he said, Williams would be pleased and flattered—his previous publishers had certainly never taken him to lunch at Lutèce.

My wife, Margaret, was a friend of the patron and chef, André Soltner, so a reservation was made quickly. For M. Williams, Mme. Soltner said, her husband would insist on preparing a special menu. I should not concern myself about the luncheon; each course would be a veritable work of art.

On the appointed day, Barnes and I met, a few minutes early. Mme. Soltner had given us the best table in the house, and from time to time she brought us bulletins from the kitchen. The *soupe d'écrevisses* in the manner of New Orleans was coming along, the boned quails would not go in the oven until M. Williams arrived. At intervals, small delicacies appeared from the kitchen to whet our appetites as we sipped our Kir Royales. Barnes was a man of dazzling charm, as Southern as Williams himself: he was good-looking, flamboyantly gay in both senses of the word, and outrageously funny, and he had a gift for jollying his most important client along at those not infrequent moments when Williams refused at the last minute to do something that Barnes had arranged for him. Tennessee, Barnes confided, could be a little difficult. Despite a basically sunny disposition, he had dark, brooding moments when he thought everyone was plotting against him, and he listened too attentively to people who were close to him but didn't always have his best interests at heart, if I knew what he meant, Barnes whispered to me conspiratorially.

I knew exactly what he meant. No genius was easy to deal with, and there was no reason that Williams should be an exception. It was already a quarter to two; might it not be a good idea, I suggested, to give Williams a call, just to make sure there had been no mixup? But no, Barnes had telephoned him in the morning, and Williams had been eagerly looking forward to meeting me. He was an artist, that was all, and, like all artists, he was unpunctual, and was not exactly a morning person.

As I was about to ask why, if that was the case, he had set the luncheon for one, the unmistakable figure of Tennessee Williams appeared, promptly at two. Mme. Soltner rose from behind the *caisse*, and Soltner himself emerged from the kitchen, wiping his hands on his apron, to greet our guest. Williams, who was smiling shyly, looked mildly confused. He was dressed in gray flannel slacks and a tweed sports jacket, with a long wool scarf loosely wound around his neck over his shirt and tie—more the kind of outfit that one might have expected to see on Sartre, say, at the Café de Flore than on a client of Lutèce. His thick, horn-rimmed glasses were askew on his nose, so that



"Loosen up and have some fun," Williams told the author, who faced the complex task of editing his work.

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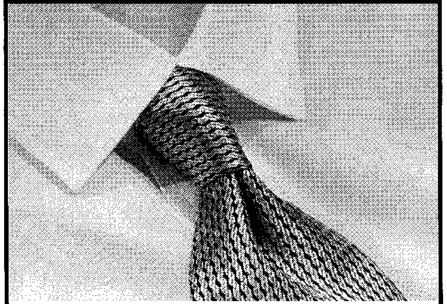

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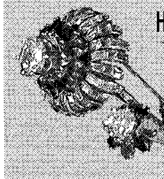

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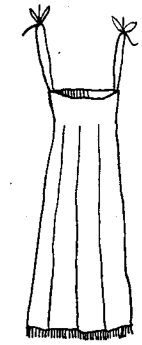
one eye was looking over the top of them and the other peeking out the bottom. "*Bonjour, cher maître!*" both Soltners called out to Williams, at the very moment when, tripping over the two or three steps in front of him, he tumbled in a heap just short of our table.

All of us rushed to get him on his feet again. Full of concern, the Soltners brushed him down, and he was gently guided to his seat. Would he take a little something to restore himself? Williams nodded, in slow motion. Perhaps a dry sherry, Soltner suggested, or a glass of white wine? Williams thought about it, his eyes half closed. "Ah believe ah'll have a vodka," he said. He thought some more. "Better make that a double."

Billy Barnes introduced me, and we were instantly on a first-name basis. Tennessee apologized for being late. "Ah overslept, baby," he explained. "Ah woke up with this sinus headache? Ah think ah may be comin' down with this cold?" He rubbed his nose hard between thumb and forefinger.

As the waiter brought the first course, Tennessee drained his glass and asked for another. He sipped his drink while we ate. Madame and her husband hovered over his shoulder anxiously, waiting for him to taste the soup, but Tennessee didn't appear to be hungry. Gradually, he became aware of their presence. He just wasn't up to eating today, he told them. It was all the cold medicine he had been taking. It cut the appetite. If he could have just a simple omelette? But of course, Soltner said, beaming, as if making an omelette were the ambition of a lifetime, and he returned to the kitchen. Yet when the omelette came Tennessee didn't touch that, either; he had another drink instead.



Barnes was talking at a fever pitch to cover long silences from Tennessee—silences interspersed with stories about people in Key West whose names meant nothing to me, at the end of which Tennessee would look at me soulfully and say, "But you know what she's like, baby, who am I to tell you?" By the time Tennessee was calling for a postprandial cognac, he had slipped so far down in his chair that his face was close to the top of the table. Suddenly, in a kind of panic, he glanced at his watch (just like the White Rabbit, I thought), and cried out, "I had no i-de-ah how late it is!" Then, in an attempt to rise to his feet, he slumped to the floor.

Barnes and I managed to walk him up the stairs and out the door to a taxi. Barnes bundled him into it briskly and then leaped in beside him, slamming the door shut. "Don't you worry!" he shouted out to me, as the cab sped off down Fiftieth Street. "He's terrific on the tube."

ACTUALLY, the question of whether Williams was terrific on TV wasn't my main concern. My concern was whether he would stay sober enough to finish his novel, which was called, despite many attempts on my part to talk him out of the idea, "Moise and the World of Reason." The pages I saw at first made no sense; it seemed to me that there was no plot. But whenever I raised the matter with Tennessee he would simply chuckle and say, "I know, I know, baby, but it'll come, don't fret." Criticism, at any rate, did not disturb him. As a playwright, he was used to rewriting things at the request of the director or the actors, and he took it all in his stride.

As we became closer, I began to appreciate the genuine sweetness of Tennessee. There was a capacity for trust in him that emerges in the characters in his plays whom he clearly loved best: Blanche, in "Streetcar"; Amanda, in "The Glass Menagerie"; indeed, most of his women. Pursued as he was by his own demons—an unhappy childhood, an attachment to his unfortunate sister Rose, alcoholism and pill dependency, a desperate need to be loved, and a taste for rough trade—he remained a true romantic about people, always trusting them until proved wrong.

Shortly after Simon & Schuster acquired his novel, Tennessee arranged for Margaret and me to attend a black-tie dinner in his honor at the National Arts Club, on Gramercy Park South, at which he was to receive an award. It was an elegant occasion, and many of the stars who had appeared in the Broadway productions of Tennessee's plays over the years were present. Tennessee sat on the dais, a shy smile on his face, his glasses and also his black bow tie askew. To his left sat the Mayor; to his right, smiling vacantly, a tiny,

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fragile-looking gnome of a woman in her late fifties, dressed in blue, with silver hair cropped short and a strangely unlined face, like that of a china doll.

Once dinner was over, the speeches began. The Mayor claimed Tennessee for New York City; various speakers from the National Arts Club claimed him for American culture; and one after another the stars who had worked in his plays rose to relate affectionate anecdotes about him. The emotional temperature of the room was rising: everywhere I looked there were people crying, by no means all of them actors, most of whom cry easily. Williams was not just admired—he was loved, as perhaps no other American playwright has been.

Throughout this display of emotion, Tennessee sat as still and gently smiling as a bronze Buddha, his mind possibly elsewhere, his eyes glassy, while his diminutive companion—who had eaten all of her dinner and a good deal of his—stuffed herself on the petits fours.

At last, the moment came for Tennessee to speak. He stood up, swaying slightly, leaned toward the microphone, and, in his musical Southern drawl, enunciating very slowly, said, "I would like to introduce you-all to mah beloved sister Rose." He paused to indicate the small woman seated beside him, who seemed unaware that he was talking about her. Tennessee smiled down at her, his expression full of sympathy but somehow puckish, took a breath, and went on, "who had the first prefrontal lobotomy in the state of Alabama."

With that, he sat down. The room remained hushed, and Rose smiled on vacantly, while the rest of us waited for Tennessee to say something—anything—else. But he had said what he wanted to say, and he had nothing to add.

A National Arts Club member seated next to me gave a loud, disapproving snort. "I told everybody we should have given the award to Arthur Miller," she said angrily. "At least he'd have made a decent acceptance speech."

ECCENTRIC behavior is expected from genius writers, most of whom are solitary people and come up for air only for brief periods between books, at which point they are often embarrassingly determined to be the life of the party until the typewriter reclaims their attention. But Tennessee was a playwright—quite

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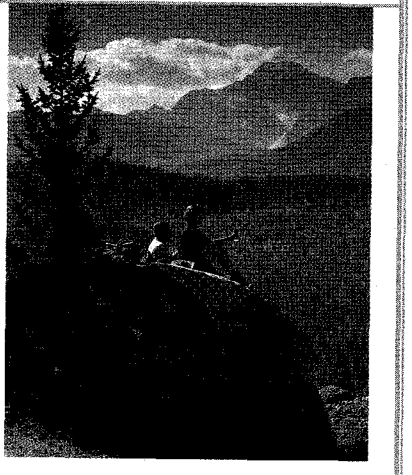

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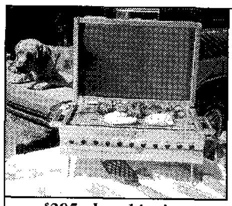

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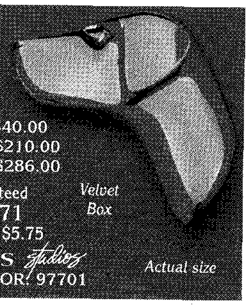

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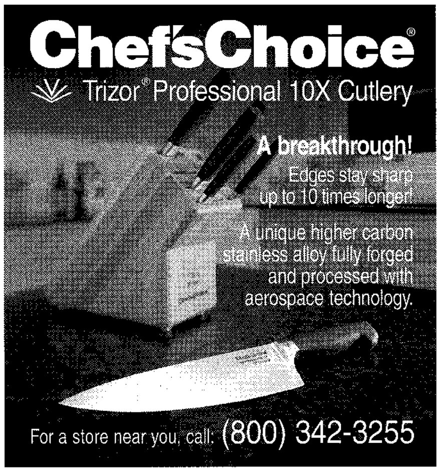
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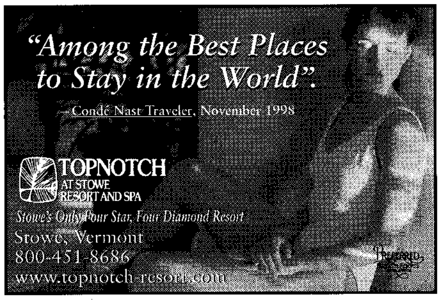
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a different creature—and, although he liked to present himself to strangers as a diffident country boy in the big city, a kind of gay Huck Finn, he was intensely social. He knew everybody from Jackie Onassis to Marlon Brando, was at home everywhere, and usually seemed to know everybody's secrets, because he had an insatiable appetite for good gossip. What was not so immediately apparent was the steel behind the charming façade. A stranger looking at Tennessee's life might have concluded that he had given up writing, for his days seemed to revolve around drinking, making telephone calls, and attending endless parties, but somehow he always found time to write—indeed, for a man in poor health, with an alcohol problem, on a witch's brew of pills (he took both uppers and downers), his productivity was amazing. I came to the conclusion that, while he liked the chaos that surrounded him, he also liked to take refuge in a world of creative solitude where nobody could follow him. Every time I went over to see him in his dark, crowded, book-filled little suite at the Easy Lay, I couldn't help noticing that he was seldom alone. There was always evidence of a party, with bottles and unwashed glasses everywhere, and from the tiny kitchen came the noise of some unseen person, banging amid the china and the glassware, presumably in a rage at having been banished from the living room because of my presence. Tennessee would carefully pretend that there was nobody in the suite but the two of us. Very often, he was suffering from what he called a sinus cold. But nothing prevented his meticulous perusal of the edited text of his book, or his shrewd advice on how to sell it.

Despite my objections to the novel's title, Tennessee insisted on "Moise and the World of Reason." He would listen to just so much advice, the steel would appear in his eyes, and, in a firm voice, he would say, "That's it, baby," and that was it.

As it happened, most of the titles of his plays had been vigorously fought over, and he had nearly always stuck to what he wanted, with happy results. "Moise" had begun as a novella, and Tennessee labored mightily to inflate it to the length of a full-sized novel without losing its pace. The story was about three people: Moise, an impoverished woman painter with a gift for leaving canvases unfinished; the narrator, a failed writer from Thelma, Alabama, who strongly resembled the young Tennessee; and Lance, the character whose intensity and sexual energy

held them all together while he lived, and whose absence gives the novel its pathos. Set one night in the Village—a night when Moise throws a party to celebrate her "retirement from the world of reason," and when the narrator loses the second love of his life—the novel is at once lyrical and puzzling, a kind of autobiographical peep show full of brilliant jeux d'esprit, in which the characters talk (and talk, and talk) about the loss of innocence and the rekindling of desire, two of Tennessee's favorite themes. He often said that he wrote all his work for Rose, but I think what he meant was that Rose's innocence and simplicity were what he sought to find and convey in his writing.

In the end, Tennessee rewrote the book so many times, in so many different places (New York, Key West, Tangier, Europe), that even he was muddled by its intricacies. This was not just a function of complicated plotting. Tennessee's pages were typed on what appeared to be several different but equally ancient manuals, all with frayed, faded ribbons; each page was heavily revised in a shaky hand, which even Tennessee could not always decipher; and whole paragraphs were slashed out fiercely, then partly restored. In my editorial notes, the questions "Where does this go?" and "Who is this?" and "What does this mean?" recur frequently, along with questions that seemed pedestrian to Tennessee: "Is there such a thing as a square camera lens?" and "What is a Blue Jay notebook?" (It turned out to be a lined school notebook with a mottled black-and-white pasteboard cover, which Tennessee had used as a boy and still liked to write in.)

In 1975, after several years of revising, "Moise" was finally published, and its sales disappointed both Tennessee and me. Most of the reviewers were baffled by the book's stagy plotline and the unbridled lyricism of its dialogue. James Leo Herlihy commented fulsomely to me that it was "like a wild street song heard on the eve of a Doom's Day that is forever postponed," while Elia Kazan, more cautiously, responded to the book I had sent him by writing simply, "Tennessee Williams is a great man." There was a natural tendency to compare it to Tennessee's major plays, however unfairly. Myself, I thought it courageous of Tennessee to have tried his hand at a

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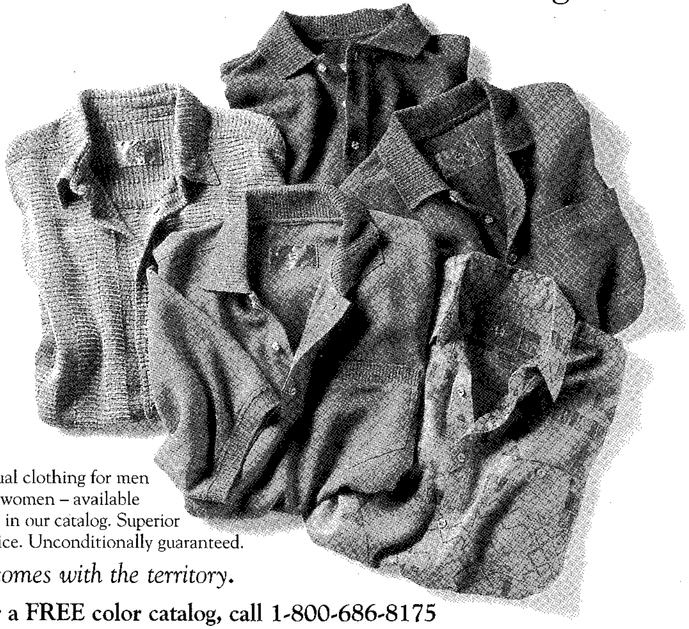

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A book, and crushed in its pages the withered
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The mirror in the west where a red sunrise
Blazes its illusion. How many things,
Files, doorsills, atlases, wine glasses, nails,
Serve us like slaves who never say a word,
Blind and so mysteriously reserved.
They will endure beyond our vanishing;
And they will never know that we have gone.

—JORGE LUIS BORGES

(*Translated, from the Spanish, by Stephen Kessler.*)

novel, particularly one that celebrated the decline of the characters' sexual and artistic powers.

THE completion of "Moise" was enough to persuade Tennessee to move forward with a collection of short stories. He proposed to gather together those stories he liked best—he wrote immense quantities of short fiction, much of which was never published, and he continued to write it into the early eighties—in a volume called "Fairy Tales," a title he was unable to mention without a fit of giggles.

I was of two minds. The title would surely guarantee publicity and controversy, to which Tennessee looked forward with glee, and it would certainly help the book's prospects. But the part of my brain which is not devoted to publishing thought that it was in doubtful taste. Every time the subject came up in marketing meetings at Simon & Schuster, opinion was divided—half the people present thought it was a stroke of genius, and the other half were appalled. However, Dick Snyder, then the president and publisher of the company, loved the title, and told me to ignore the doubters. "It'll sell books," he said firmly. When I expressed my doubts to Tennessee, he told me, "Loosen up and have some fun, baby," with a warning snap of venom in his voice. "Don't worry," Barnes said to me later. "He's just having his fun. He'll change his mind before the book hits the stores, you'll see."

A greater worry was the stories themselves, many of which were at that point incomplete or impossible to understand, or were simply bizarre. Some sense of them can be gained from their titles, which included "The Killer Chicken and the Closet Queen," "Mother Yaws," and "Tent Worms." A surviving note from my then assistant John Herman, no mean judge of literary fiction, reads, "For whatever it's worth, these seem to me brilliantly written, humorous, but utterly outlandish. I found them very hard to follow." One of the stories, "The Donsinger Women and Their Handyman Jack," seemed to have been composed by Tennessee in many different places and states of mind: changes were scrawled in various colors, some recent and bold, others of ancient origin and scarcely legible. The Donsinger women are a large family of sisters occupying a crumbling mansion in some West Texas town. Predatory, intermittently cannibalistic, and nymphomaniacal, the sisters spend their days in rocking chairs on their veranda, making lewd conversation. One of them finds a young man named Jack on the street who has been kicked off the family ranch by his father; she hides him in the unused chicken house, hoping he will serve as her handyman and stud, but it turns out that (though he is spectacularly well endowed) that is not on his agenda. He is a poet, and has eyes only for beautiful

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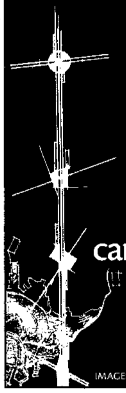

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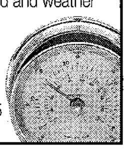

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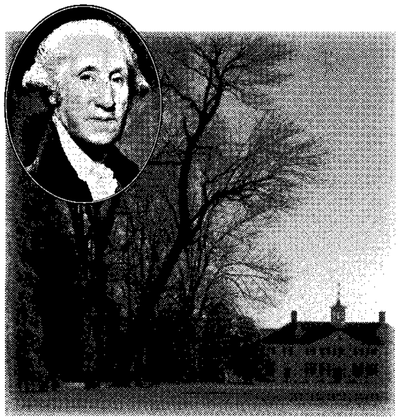

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young Oriental men delivering Chinese food. After much violence and bloodshed involving the National Guard, the sisters are incarcerated in the state mental asylum, and they escape from there merely to self-destruct. Jack is eventually spurned by the Chinese youth he loves, and is last seen sunk in grief on the porch of the decaying Donsinger house. The moral of the story is that grief, to the person of feeling, is a permanent wound, not a transient state: it "may move into the human heart and take up residence there." To which the author added a moving phrase that is Tennessee at his best (as much of the rest of the story is Tennessee at his worst): "And the heart is a stubborn organ."

The line might almost have served as Williams's motto; it was certainly the theme of each of these stories, whatever their relative merits. By the time Tennessee was writing "The Donsinger Women," in 1982, he was on a roller coaster of pills and booze; his writing, which he persisted in almost defiantly, showed the consequences, and he knew it. Yet even in "The Donsinger Women" there are flashes of the old lyricism—the occasional wonderful phrase and the sense of a powerful imagination going hauntingly out of control. Tennessee could tell that the stories needed work, but, despite the many hours I spent with him at the Easy Lay, trying to make sense of them, he found it hard to concentrate on revising them. In the meantime, he was having second thoughts about the title just as we were about to announce it in our catalogue. He called me out of the blue one day, as Barnes had warned, to say that he couldn't allow the collection to be called "Fairy Tales." "Baby, I don't know whose suggestion it was," he said, "but it's tacky."

IT was easy enough to guess that Tennessee's life was coming apart. He was hard to reach, restlessly on the move, and plagued by ill health of an unspecified nature. A photograph taken at the time, which was intended for the jacket of "Fairy Tales," shows him wearing a neat straw hat and smiling seraphically, his eyes obscured by big dark glasses. The effect is to cancel out the smile, or to contradict it, and there is a ghostly sadness to the picture, as if he had already guessed that it would never be used for its intended purpose. Indeed, "Fairy

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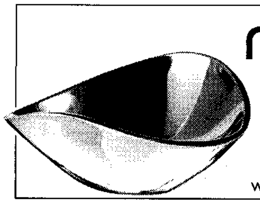

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Tales" (or whatever it was going to be called) was postponed several times, from one season to the next, while I pleaded for a chance to talk to Tennessee about it, for he had gone to ground, in Key West or elsewhere, and was impossible to reach.

By this time, I had real worries. Every time a book is postponed after appearing in a publisher's catalogue, the orders are cancelled. When new orders are solicited, on the next list, they are invariably fewer, and after a number of postponements the bookstores simply lose interest and decide that the book is never going to happen. At that point, it falls into limbo, from which no amount of effort is likely to rescue it.

After considerable difficulty, I managed to arrange a meeting with Tennessee in New York, and I turned up at the Easy Lay to find him in his bathrobe, with a towel wound around his neck. He did not look well—his face was puffy, and there was a noticeable tremor in his hands. The living-room blinds were pulled down, and around us, covering every flat surface in the room, was the evidence of a party that must have ended only hours ago—bottles, glasses, overflowing ashtrays. Tennessee seemed baffled by my presence, although I had called several times to confirm our meeting. From time to time, he glanced uneasily toward the kitchen, where, as usual, somebody was crashing about in a rage.

I offered to come back another day, but Tennessee waved away the suggestion, and there followed a long pause, interrupted by somebody whistling the phrase "You make me feel like a natural woman" off key in the kitchen, or possibly the bedroom; it was hard to be sure of the geography of the apartment. One sensed that there was a world beyond this room, but, like characters onstage in a play, we were cut off from it.

Had I had breakfast, Tennessee wanted to know. I nodded. I was almost ready for lunch, in fact. Tennessee sighed. "Ah have not," he said gravely, and, picking up a glass, he emptied the contents of several other glasses into it, swilled it, and took a gulp. "That's better," he said. What were we going to talk about?

I pulled some manuscripts out of my briefcase, together with some notes that John Herman and I had made about passages that confused us. Tennessee glanced at this sheaf of papers with suspicion and alarm.

Then the phone beside him rang; he picked it up and listened intently. "Uh-huh," he said. "Uh-huh, uh-huh, baby." He listened some more. I could hear the voice on the other end—a thin, angry electronic squeak. Tennessee closed his eyes, wincing. "I'm real sorry," he said. "Uh-huh. . . . No, real sorry, baby. . . . I mean it." He listened some more, then drew an index card from the pocket of his dressing gown. He held it up close to his eyes but was unable to focus on it. He turned it upside down, and then, in a pleading voice, he said slowly, "No, baby, I can't talk about it now, I'm in the middle of a meeting with—" He frowned, and tried turning the card the other way around. "With mah editor. . . ." An anguished pause, as he searched for the name; finally, he thought he had it: "With mah editor, Michael Kop-ta." He gave me a questioning look over his crooked glasses, and I shook my head. He put down the receiver. "Michael Korda," I said. He nodded. "I know, baby," he said softly. "It was on the tip of mah tongue."

I left him in the cluttered apartment where he was to be found one morning in February of 1983, with drugs and alcohol in his bloodstream and a prescription-bottle cap stuck in his throat. Now, as I said goodbye, he was still sipping his "wake-me-upper" of leftover drinks. He sent me a letter a few days later, to make sure that my feelings hadn't been hurt by his lapse of memory, but, as I assured him, I didn't mind. About the confusion in the two stories I had come to discuss with him, Tennessee commented, "Maybe [they] got mixed up a bit in your office. Offices do that to Mss., viz ICM. . . . Sorry they didn't make your Fall list. . . . Fondly, Tennessee."

He also sent me a draft of a new story, "Old Sweetheart of the Keys," about two cousins who own a decrepit bar on Dry Bone Drive, one of whom sits rocking on the veranda. Toward the end of the story, Tennessee had added a warning from one cousin to the other: "You can't rock faster than death." It was an image that appeared in my mind, not long afterward, when I heard that he had died. ♦

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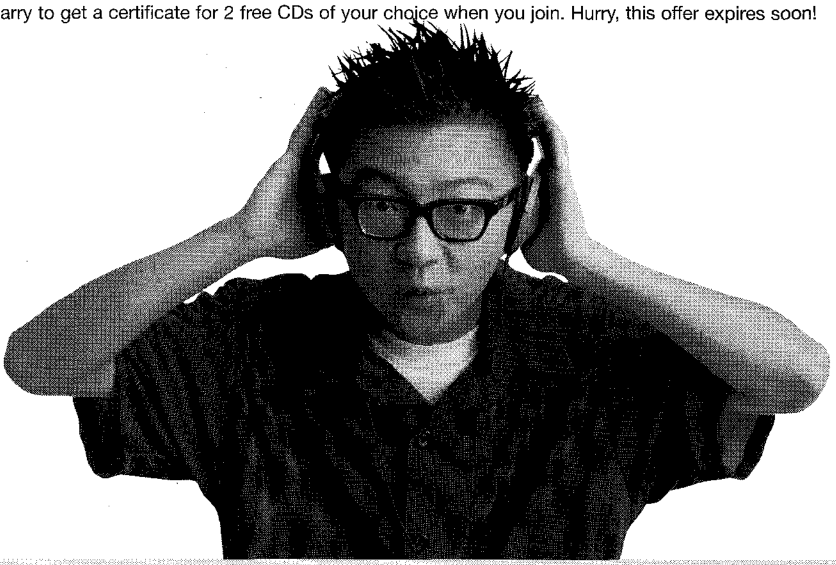

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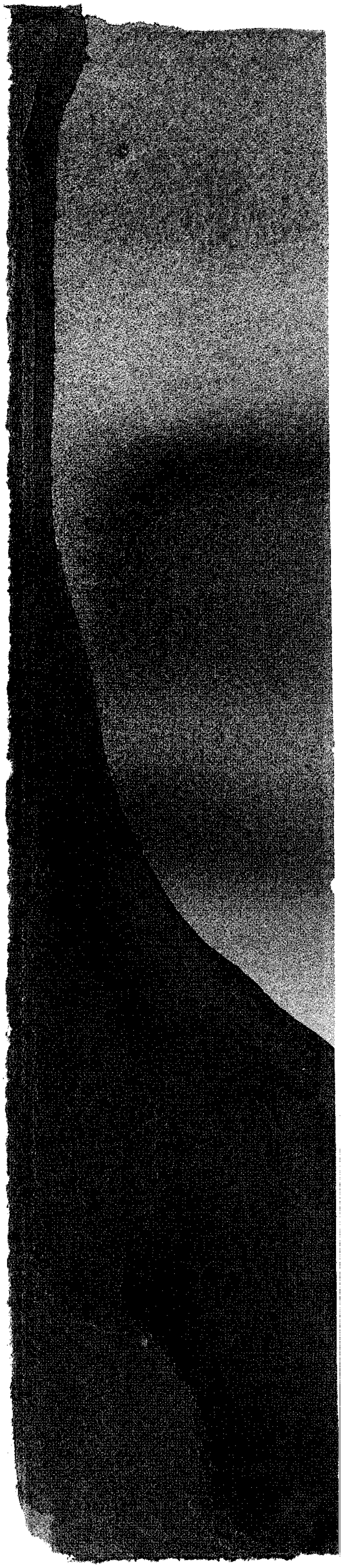


SHIRLEY POLYKOFF, ALL-AMERICAN

DURING the Depression—long before she became one of the most famous copywriters of her day—Shirley Polykoff met a man named George Halperin. He was the son of an Orthodox rabbi from Reading, Pennsylvania, and soon after they began courting he took her home for Passover to meet his family. They ate roast chicken, tzimmes, and sponge cake, and Polykoff hit it off with Rabbi Halperin, who was warm and funny. George's mother was another story. She was Old World Orthodox, with severe, tightly pulled back hair; no one was good enough for her son.

"How'd I do, George?" Shirley asked as soon as they got in the car for the drive home. "Did your mother like me?"

He was evasive. "My sister Mildred thought you were great."

"That's nice, George," she said. "But what did your *mother* say?"

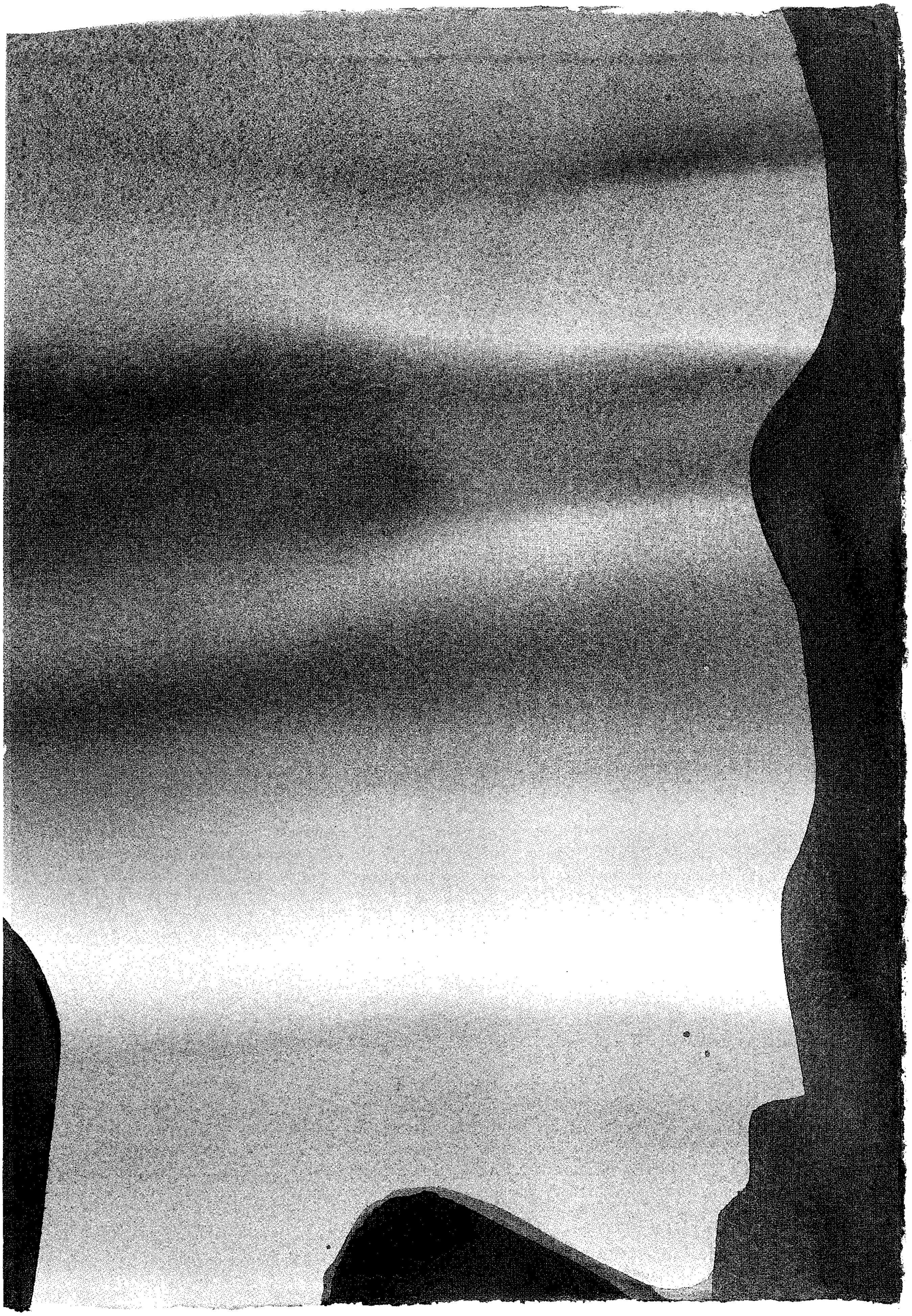
There was a pause. "She says you paint your hair." Another pause. "Well, do you?"

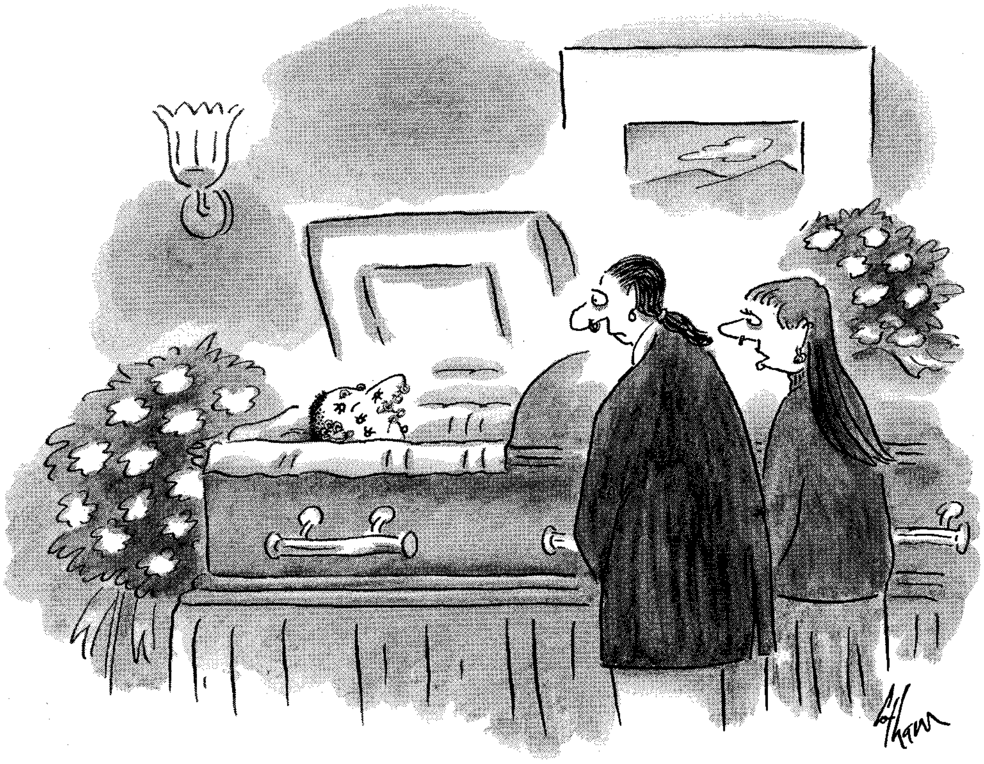
Shirley Polykoff was humiliated. In her mind she could hear her future mother-in-law: *Fahrbt zi der huer? Oder fahrbt zi nisht?* Does she color her hair? Or doesn't she?

The answer, of course, was that she did. Shirley Polykoff always dyed her hair, even in the days when the only women who went blond were chorus girls and hookers. At home in Brooklyn, starting when she was fifteen, she would go to Mr. Nicholas's beauty salon, one flight up, and he would "lighten the back" until all traces of her natural brown were gone. She thought she ought to be a blonde—or, to be more precise, she thought that the decision about whether she could be a blonde was rightfully hers, and not God's. Shirley dressed in deep oranges and deep reds and creamy beiges and royal hues. She wore purple suède and aqua silk, and was the kind of person who might take a couture jacket home and embroider some new detail on it. Once, in the days when she had her own advertising agency, she was on her way to Memphis to make a presentation to Maybelline and her taxi broke down in the middle of the expressway. She jumped out and flagged down a Pepsi-Cola truck, and the truck driver told her he had picked her up because he'd never seen anyone quite like her before. "Shirley would wear three outfits, all at once, and each one of them would look great," Dick Huebner, who was her creative director, says. She was flamboyant and brilliant and vain in an irresistible way, and it was her conviction that none of those qualities went with brown hair. The kind of person she spent her life turning herself into did not go with brown hair. Shirley's parents were Hyman Polykoff, small-time necktie merchant, and Rose Polykoff, housewife and mother, of East New York and Flatbush, by way of the Ukraine. Shirley ended up on Park Avenue at Eighty-second. "If you asked my mother 'Are you proud to be Jewish?' she would have said yes," her daughter, Alix Nelson Frick, says. "She wasn't trying to pass. But she believed in the dream, and the dream was that you could acquire all the accoutrements of the established affluent class, which included a certain breeding and a certain kind of look. Her idea was that you should be whatever you want to be, including being a blonde."

In 1956, when Shirley Polykoff was a junior copywriter at Foote, Cone & Belding, she was given the Clairol account. The product the company was launching was Miss Clairol, the first

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MATS GUSTAFSON





"He had himself pierced once too often."

hair-color bath that made it possible to lighten, tint, condition, and shampoo at home, in a single step—to take, say, Topaz (for a champagne blond) or Moon Gold (for a medium ash), apply it in a peroxide solution directly to the hair, and get results in twenty minutes. When the Clairol sales team demonstrated their new product at the International Beauty Show, in the old Statler Hotel, across from Madison Square Garden, thousands of assembled beauticians jammed the hall and watched, openmouthed, demonstration after demonstration. "They were astonished," recalls Bruce Gelb, who ran Clairol for years, along with his father, Lawrence, and his brother Richard. "This was to the world of hair color what computers were to the world of adding machines. The sales guys had to bring buckets of water and do the rinsing off in front of everyone, because the hairdressers in the crowd were convinced we were doing something to the models behind the scenes."

Miss Clairol gave American women the ability, for the first time, to color their hair quickly and easily at home. But there was still the stigma—the prospect of the disapproving mother-in-law. Shirley Polykoff knew immediately what she wanted to say, because if she believed that a woman had a right to be a blonde she also believed that a woman ought to be able to exercise that right with discretion. "Does she or doesn't she?" she wrote, translating from the Yiddish to the English. "Only her hairdresser knows for sure." Clairol bought thirteen ad pages in *Life* in the fall of 1956, and Miss Clairol took off like a bird. That was the beginning. For Nice 'n Easy, Clairol's breakthrough shampoo-in hair color, she wrote, "The closer he gets, the better you look." For Lady Clairol, the cream-and-bleach combination that brought silver and platinum shades to Middle America, she wrote, "Is it true blondes have more fun?" and then, even more memorably, "If I've only one life, let me live it as a blonde!" (In the summer of 1962, just before "The Feminine Mystique" was published, Betty Friedan was, in the words of her biographer, so "bewitched" by that phrase that she bleached her hair.) Shirley Polykoff wrote the lines; Clairol perfected the product. And from the fifties to the seventies, when Polykoff gave up the account, the number of American women coloring their hair rose from seven per cent to more than forty per cent.

Today, when women go from brown to blond to red to black and back again without blinking, we think of hair-color products the way we think of lipstick. On drugstore shelves there are bottles and bottles of hair-color products with names like Hydrience and Excellence and Preference and Natural Instincts and Loving Care and Nice 'n Easy, and so on, each in dozens of different shades. Féria, the new, youth-oriented brand from L'Oréal, comes in Chocolate Cherry and Champagne Cocktail—colors that don't ask "Does she or doesn't she?" but blithely assume "Yes, she does." Hair dye is now a billion-dollar-a-year commodity.

Yet there was a time, not so long ago—between, roughly speaking, the start of Eisenhower's Administration and the end of Carter's—when hair color *meant* something. Lines like "Does she or doesn't she?" or the famous 1973 slogan for L'Oréal's Preference—"Because I'm worth it"—were as instantly memorable as "Winston tastes good like a cigarette should" or "Things go better with Coke." They lingered long after advertising usually does and entered the language; they somehow managed to take on meanings well outside their stated intention. Between the fifties and the seventies, women entered the workplace, fought for social emancipation, got the Pill, and changed what they did with their hair. To examine the hair-color campaigns of the period is to see, quite unexpectedly, all these things as bound up together, the profound with the seemingly trivial. In writing the history of women in the postwar era, did we forget something important? Did we leave out hair?

WHEN the "Does she or doesn't she?" campaign first ran, in 1956, most advertisements that were aimed at women tended to be high glamour—"cherries in the snow, fire and ice," as Bruce Gelb puts it. But Shirley Polykoff insisted that the models for the Miss Clairol campaign be more like the girl next door—"Shirtwaist types instead of glamour gowns," she wrote in her original memo to Clairol. "Cashmere-sweater-over-the-shoulder types. Like larger-than-life portraits of the proverbial girl on the block who's a little prettier than your wife and lives in a house slightly nicer than yours." The model had to be a Doris Day type—not a Jayne Mansfield—because the idea was to make hair color as respectable and mainstream as possible. One of the earliest "Does she or doesn't she?" television commercials featured a housewife, in the kitchen preparing hors d'œuvres for a party. She is slender and pretty and wearing a black cocktail dress and an apron. Her husband comes in, kisses her on the lips, approvingly pats her very blond hair, then holds the kitchen door for her as she takes the tray of hors d'œuvres out for her guests. It is an exquisitely choreographed domestic tableau, down to the little dip the housewife performs as she hits the kitchen light switch with her elbow on her way out the door. In one of the early print ads—which were shot by Richard Avedon and then by Irving Penn—a woman with strawberry-blond hair is lying on the grass, holding a dandelion between her fingers, and lying next to her is a girl of about eight or nine. What's striking is that the little girl's hair is the same shade of blond as her mother's. The "Does she or doesn't she?" print ads always included a child with the mother to undercut the sexual undertones of the slogan—to make it clear that mothers were using Miss Clairol, and not just "fast" women—and, most of all, to provide a precise color match. Who could ever guess, given the comparison, that Mom's shade came out of a bottle?

The Polykoff campaigns were a sensation. Letters poured in to Clairol. "Thank you for changing my life," read one, which was circulated around the company and used as the theme for a national sales meeting. "My boyfriend, Harold, and I were keeping company for five years but he never wanted to set a date. This made me very nervous. I am twenty-eight and my mother kept saying soon it would be too late for me." Then, the letter writer said, she saw a Clairol ad in the subway. She dyed her hair blond, and "that is how I am in Bermuda now on my honeymoon with Harold." Polykoff was sent a copy with a memo: "It's almost too good to be true!" With her sentimental idyll of blond mother and child, Shirley Polykoff had created something iconic.

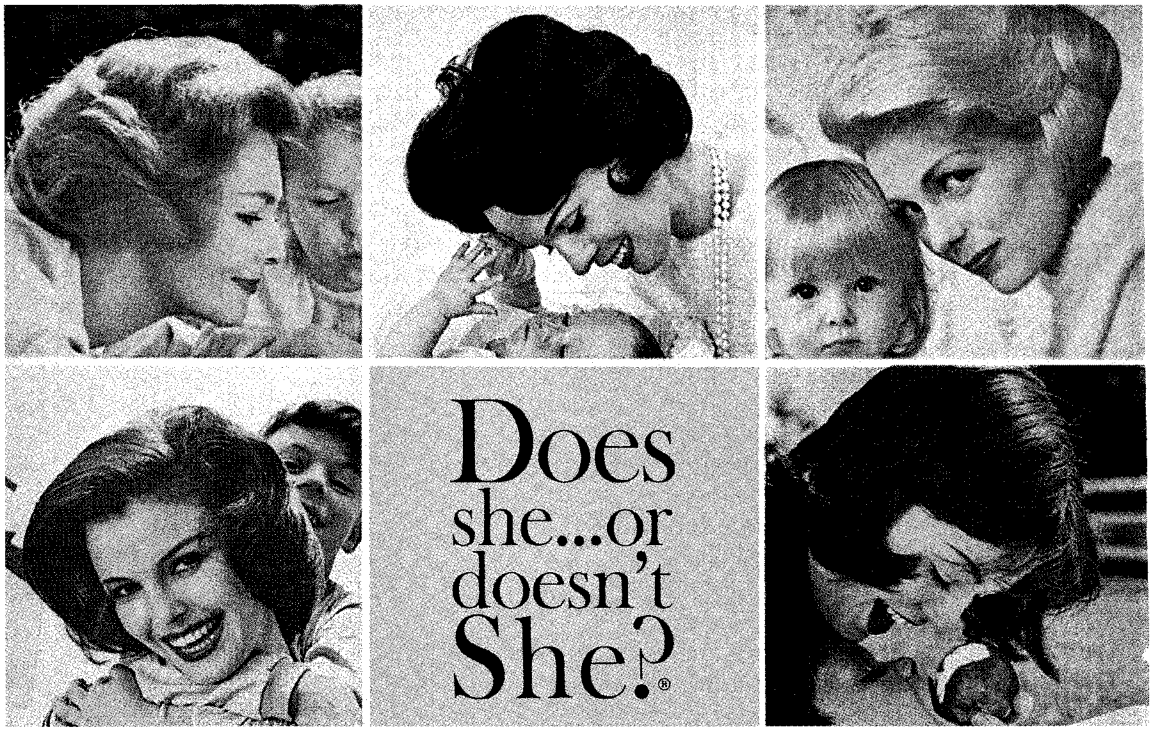
"My mother wanted to be that woman in the picture," Polykoff's daughter, Frick, says. "She was wedded to the notion of that suburban, tastefully dressed, well-coddled matron who was an adornment to her husband, a loving mother, a long-suffering wife, a person who never overshadowed him. She wanted the blond child. In fact, I was blond as a kid, but when I was about thirteen my hair got darker and my mother started bleaching it." Of course—and this is the contradiction central to those early Clairol campaigns—Shirley Polykoff wasn't really that kind of woman at all. She always had a career. She never moved to the suburbs. "She maintained that women were supposed to be feminine, and not too dogmatic and not overshadow their husband, but she greatly overshadowed my father, who was a very pure, unaggressive, intellectual type," Frick says. "She was very flamboyant, very emotional, very dominating."

One of the stories Polykoff told about herself repeatedly—and that even appeared after her death last year, in her *Times* obituary—was that she felt that a woman never ought to make more than her husband, and that only after George's death, in the early sixties, would she let Foote, Cone & Belding raise her salary to its deserved level. "That's part of the legend, but it isn't the truth," Frick says. "The ideal was always as vividly real to her as whatever actual parallel reality she might be living. She never wavered in her belief in that dream, even if you would point out to her some of the fallacies of that dream, or the weaknesses, or the internal contradictions, or the fact that she herself didn't really live her life that way." For Shirley Polykoff, the color of her hair was a kind of useful fiction, a way of bridging the contradiction between the kind of woman she was and the kind of woman she felt she ought to be. It was a way of having it all. She wanted to look and feel like Doris Day without having to be Doris Day. In twenty-seven years of marriage, during which she bore two children, she spent

Q. Stevenson

"You know what? I'm sick of clothes. I decided to go for a window treatment instead."

exactly two weeks as a housewife, every day of which was a domestic and culinary disaster. “Listen, sweetie,” an exasperated George finally told her. “You make a lousy little woman in the kitchen.” She went back to work the following Monday.



A 1963 ad from Shirley Polykoff's campaign. For her generation, hair color was a kind of useful fiction—a

GASLIGHT AD ARCHIVES, COMMACK, NY

This notion of the useful fiction—of looking the part without being the part—had a particular resonance for the America of Shirley Polykoff's generation. As a teen-ager, Shirley Polykoff tried to get a position as a clerk at an insurance agency and failed. Then she tried again, at another firm, applying as Shirley Miller. This time, she got the job. Her husband, George, also knew the value of appearances. The week Polykoff first met him, she was dazzled by his worldly sophistication, his knowledge of out-of-the-way places in Europe, his exquisite taste in fine food and wine. The second week, she learned that his expertise was all show, derived from reading the *Times*. The truth was that George had started his career loading boxes in the basement of Macy's by day and studying law at night. He was a faker, just as, in a certain sense, she was, because to be Jewish—or Irish or Italian or African-American or, for that matter, a woman of the fifties caught up in the first faint stirrings of feminism—was to be compelled to fake it in a thousand small ways, to pass as one thing when, deep inside, you were something else. “That's the kind of pressure that comes from the immigrants' arriving and thinking that they don't look right, that they are kind of funny-looking and maybe shorter than everyone else, and their clothes aren't expensive,” Frick says. “That's why many of them began to sew, so they could imitate the patterns of the day. You were making yourself over. You were turning yourself into an American.” Frick, who is also in advertising (she's the chairman of Spier NY), is a forcefully intelligent woman, who speaks of her mother with honesty and affection. “There were all those phrases that came to fruition at that time—you know, ‘clothes make the man’ and ‘first impressions count.’ ” So the question “Does she or doesn't she?” wasn't just about how no one could ever really know what you were doing. It was about how no one could ever really know who you were. It really meant not “Does she?” but “*Is* she?” It really meant “Is she a contented homemaker or a feminist, a Jew or a Gentile—or isn't she?”

I AM ILON SPECHT, HEAR ME ROAR

IN 1973, Ilon Specht was working as a copywriter at the McCann-Erickson advertising agency, in New York. She was a twenty-three-year-old college dropout from California. She was rebellious, unconventional, and independent, and she had come East to work on Madison Avenue, because that's where people like that went to work back then. “It was a different business in those days,” Susan Schermer, a long-time friend of Specht's, says. “It was the seventies. People were wearing feathers to work.” At her previous agency, while she was still in her teens, Specht had written a famous television commercial for the Peace Corps. (Single shot. No cuts. A young couple lying on the beach. “It's a big, wide wonderful world” is playing on a radio. Voice-over recites a series of horrible facts about less fortunate parts of the world: in the Middle East half the children die before their sixth birthday, and so forth. A news broadcast is announced as the song ends, and the woman on the beach changes the station.)

“Ilon? Omigod! She was one of the craziest people I ever worked with,” Ira Madris, another colleague from those years, recalls, using the word “crazy” as the highest of compliments. “And brilliant. And dogmatic. And highly creative. We all believed back then that having a certain degree of neurosis made you interesting. Ilon had a degree of neurosis that made her *very* interesting.”

At McCann, Ilon Specht was working with L'Oréal, a French company that was trying to challenge Clairol's dominance in the American hair-color market. L'Oréal had originally wanted to do a series of comparison spots, presenting research proving that their new product—Preference—was technologically superior to Nice 'n Easy, because it delivered a more natural, translucent color. But at the last minute the campaign was killed because the research hadn't been done in the United States. At McCann, there was panic. “We were four weeks before air date and we had nothing—nada,” Michael Sennott, a staffer who was also working on the account, says. The creative team locked itself away: Specht, Madris—who was the art director on the account—and a handful of others. “We were sitting in this big office,” Specht recalls. “And everyone was discussing what the ad should be. They wanted to do something with a woman sitting by a window, and the wind blowing through the curtains. You know, one of those fake places with big, glamorous curtains. The woman was a complete object. I don't think she even spoke. They just didn't get it. We were in there for hours.”

way of bridging the contradiction between the woman you were and the woman you were supposed to be.

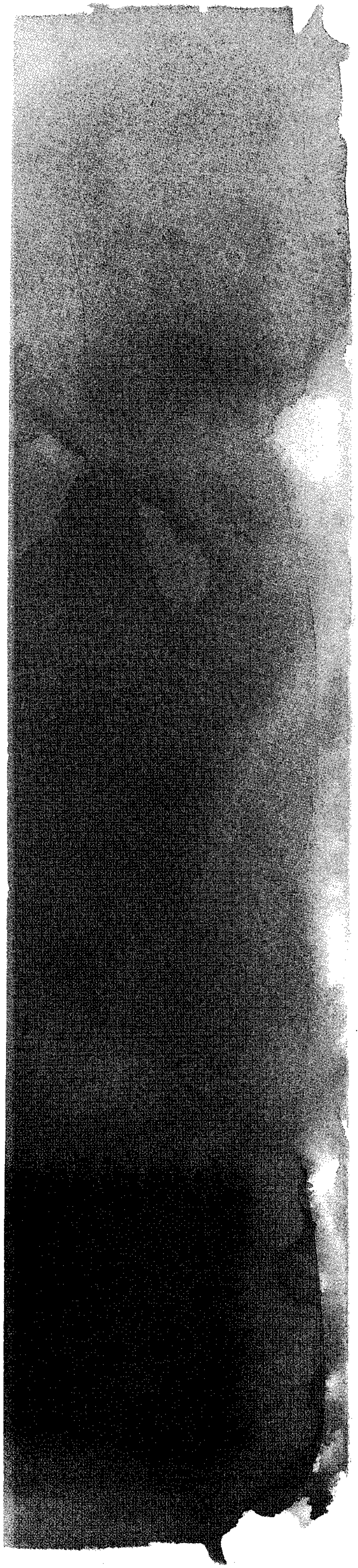
Ilon Specht is now the executive creative director of Jordan, McGrath, Case & Partners, in the Flatiron district, with a big office overlooking Fifth Avenue. She has long, thick black hair, held in a loose knot at the top of her head, and lipstick the color of maraschino cherries. She talks fast and loud, and swivels in her chair as she speaks, and when people walk by her office they sometimes bang on her door, as if the best way to get her attention is to be as loud and emphatic as she is. Reminiscing not long ago about the seventies, she spoke about the strangeness of corporate clients in shiny suits who would say that all the women in the office looked like models. She spoke about what it meant to be young in a business dominated by older men, and about what it felt like to write a line of copy that used the word “woman” and have someone cross it out and write “girl.”

“I was a twenty-three-year-old girl—a woman,” she said. “What would my state of mind have been? I could just see that they had this traditional view of women, and my feeling was that I'm not writing an ad about looking good for men, which is what it seems to me that they were doing. I just thought, *Fuck you.* I sat down and did it, in five minutes. It was very personal. I can recite to you the whole commercial, because I was so angry when I wrote it.”

Specht sat stock still and lowered her voice: “I use the most expensive hair color in the world. Preference, by L'Oréal. It's not that I care about money. It's that I care about my hair. It's not just the color. I expect great color. What's worth more to me is the way my hair feels. Smooth and silky but with body. It feels good against my neck. Actually, I don't mind spending more for L'Oréal. Because I'm”—and here Specht took her fist and struck her chest—“worth it.”

The power of the commercial was originally thought to lie in its subtle justification of the fact that Preference cost ten cents more than Nice 'n Easy. But it quickly became obvious that the last line was the one that counted. On the strength of “Because I'm worth it,” Preference began stealing market share from Clairol. In the nineteen-eighties, Preference surpassed Nice 'n Easy as the leading hair-color brand in the country, and two years ago L' Oréal took the phrase and made it the slogan for the whole company. An astonishing seventy-one per cent of American women can now identify that phrase as the L'Oréal signature, which, for a slogan—as opposed to a brand name—is almost without precedent.

FROM the very beginning, the Preference campaign was unusual. Polykoff's Clairol spots had male voice-overs. In the L'Oréal ads, the model herself spoke, directly and personally. Polykoff's commercials were “other-directed”—they were about what the group was saying (“Does she or doesn't she?”) or what a husband might think (“The closer he gets, the better you look”). Specht's line was what a woman says to herself. Even in the choice of models, the two campaigns diverged. Polykoff wanted fresh, girl-next-door types. McCann and L'Oréal wanted models who somehow embodied the complicated mixture of strength and vulnerability implied by “Because I'm worth it.” In the late seventies, Meredith Baxter Birney was the brand spokeswoman. At that time, she was playing a recently divorced mom going to law school on the TV drama “Family.” McCann scheduled her spots during “Dallas” and other shows featuring so-called “silk blouse” women—women of strength and independence. Then came Cybill Shepherd, at the height of her run as the brash, independent Maddie on “Moonlight-



ing," in the eighties. Now the brand is represented by Heather Locklear, the tough and sexy star of "Melrose Place." All the L'Oréal spokeswomen are blondes, but blondes of a particular type. In his brilliant 1995 book, "Big Hair: A Journey into the Transformation of Self," the Canadian anthropologist Grant McCracken argued for something he calls the "blondness periodic table," in which blondes are divided into six categories: the "bombshell blonde" (Mae West, Marilyn Monroe), the "sunny blonde" (Doris Day, Goldie Hawn), the "brassy blonde" (Candice Bergen), the "dangerous blonde" (Sharon Stone), the "society blonde" (C. Z. Guest), and the "cool blonde" (Marlene Dietrich, Grace Kelly). L'Oréal's innovation was to carve out a niche for itself in between the sunny blondes—the "simple, mild, and innocent" blondes—and the smart, bold, brassy blondes, who, in McCracken's words, "do not mediate their feelings or modulate their voices."

This is not an easy sensibility to capture. Countless actresses have auditioned for L'Oréal over the years and been turned down. "There was one casting we did with Brigitte Bardot," Ira Madris recalls (this was for another L'Oréal product), "and Brigitte, being who she is, had the damnedest time saying that line. There was something inside of her that didn't believe it. It didn't have any conviction." Of course it didn't: Bardot is bombshell, not sassy. Clairol made a run at the Preference sensibility for itself, hiring Linda Evans in the eighties as the pitchwoman for Ultress, the brand aimed at Preference's upscale positioning. This didn't work, either. Evans, who played the adoring wife of Blake Carrington on "Dynasty," was too sunny. ("The hardest thing she did on that show," Michael Sennott says, perhaps a bit unfairly, "was rearrange the flowers.")

Even if you got the blonde right, though, there was still the matter of the slogan. For a Miss Clairol campaign in the seventies, Polykoff wrote a series of spots with the tag line "This I do for me." But "This I do for me" was at best a halfhearted approximation of "Because I'm worth it"—particularly for a brand that had spent its first twenty years saying something entirely different. "My mother thought there was something too brazen about 'I'm worth it,'" Frick told me. "She was always concerned with what people around her might think. She could never have come out with that bald-faced an equation between hair color and self-esteem."

The truth is that Polykoff's sensibility—which found freedom in assimilation—had been overtaken by events. In one of Polykoff's "Is it true blondes have more fun?" commercials for Lady Clairol in the sixties, for example, there is a moment that by 1973 must have been painful to watch. A young woman, radiantly blond, is by a lake, being swung around in the air by a darkly handsome young man. His arms are around her waist. Her arms are around his neck, her shoes off, her face aglow. The voice-over is male, deep and sonorous. "Chances are," the voice says, "she'd have gotten the young man anyhow, but you'll never convince her of that." Here was the downside to Shirley Polykoff's world. You could get what you wanted by faking it, but then you would never know whether it was you or the bit of fakery that made the difference. You ran the risk of losing sight of who you really were. Shirley Polykoff knew that the all-American life was worth it, and that "he"—the handsome man by the lake, or the reluctant boyfriend who finally whisks you off to Bermuda—was worth it. But, by the end of the sixties, women wanted to know that *they* were worth it, too.

WHAT HERTA HERZOG KNEW

WHY are Shirley Polykoff and Ilon Specht important? That seems like a question that can easily be answered in the details of their campaigns. They were brilliant copywriters, who managed in the space of a phrase to capture the particular feminist sensibilities of the day. They are an example of a strange moment in American social history when hair dye somehow got tangled up in the politics of assimilation and feminism and self-esteem. But in a certain way their stories are about much more: they are about the relationship we have to the products we buy, and about the slow realization among advertisers that unless they understood the psychological particulars of that relationship—unless they could dignify the transactions of everyday life by granting them meaning—they could not hope to reach the modern consumer. Shirley Polykoff and Ilon Specht perfected a certain genre of advertising which did just this, and one way to understand the Madison Avenue revolution of the postwar era is as a collective attempt to define and extend that genre. The revolution was led by a handful of social scientists, chief among whom was an elegant, Viennese-trained psychologist by the name of Herta Herzog. What did Herta Herzog know? She knew—or, at least, she thought she knew—the theory behind the success of slogans like "Does she or doesn't she?" and "Because I'm worth it," and that makes Herta Herzog, in the end, every bit as important as Shirley Polykoff and Ilon Specht.

Herzog worked at a small advertising agency called Jack Tinker & Partners, and people who were in the business in those days speak of Tinker the way baseball fans talk about the 1927 Yankees. Tinker was the brainchild of the legendary adman Marion Harper, who came to believe that the agency he was running, McCann-Erickson, was too big and unwieldy to be able to consider things properly. His solution was to pluck a handful of the very best and brightest from McCann and set them up, first in the Waldorf Towers (in the suite directly below the Duke and Duchess of Windsor's and directly above General Douglas MacArthur's) and then, more permanently, in the Dorset Hotel, on West Fifty-fourth Street, overlooking the Museum of Modern Art. The Tinker Group rented the penthouse, complete with a huge terrace, Venetian-tiled floors, a double-height living room, an antique French polished-pewter bar, a marble fireplace, spectacular skyline views, and a rotating exhibit of modern art (hung by the partners for motivational purposes), with everything—walls, carpets, ceilings, furnishings—a bright, dazzling white. It was supposed to be a think tank, but Tinker was so successful so fast that clients were soon lined up outside the door. When Buick wanted a name for its new luxury coupé, the Tinker Group came up with Riviera. When Bulova wanted a name for its new quartz watch, Tinker suggested Accutron. Tinker also worked with Coca-Cola and Exxon and Westinghouse and countless others, whose names—according to the strict standards of secrecy observed by the group—they would not divulge. Tinker started with four partners and a single phone. But by the end of the sixties it had taken over eight floors of the Dorset.

"Have I told you about my new belt?"

What distinguished Tinker was its particular reliance on the methodology known as motivational research, which was brought to Madison Avenue in the nineteen-forties by a cadre of European intellectuals trained at the University of Vienna. Advertising research up until that point had been concerned with counting heads—with recording *who* was buying what. But the motivational researchers were concerned with *why:* Why do people buy what they do? What motivates them when they shop? The researchers devised surveys, with hundreds of questions, based on Freudian dynamic psychology. They used hypnosis, the Rosenzweig Picture-Frustration Study, role-playing, and Rorschach blots, and they invented what we now call the focus group. There was Paul Lazarsfeld, one of the giants of twentieth-century sociology, who devised something called the Lazarsfeld-Stanton Program Analyzer, a little device with buttons to record precisely the emotional responses of research subjects. There was Hans Zeisel, who had been a patient of Alfred Adler's in Vienna, and went to work at McCann-Erickson. There was Ernest Dichter, who had studied under Lazarsfeld at the Psychological Institute in Vienna, and who did consulting for hundreds of the major corporations of the day. And there was Tinker's Herta Herzog, perhaps the most accomplished motivational researcher of all, who trained dozens of interviewers in the Viennese method and sent them out to analyze the psyche of the American consumer.

"For Puerto Rican rum once, Herta

wanted to do a study of why people drink, to tap into that below-the-surface kind of thing," Rena Bartos, a former advertising executive who worked with Herta in the early days, recalls. "We would would invite someone out to drink and they would order whatever they normally order, and we would administer a psychological test. Then we'd do it again at the very end of the discussion, after the drinks. The point was to see how people's personality was altered under the influence of alcohol." Herzog helped choose the name of Oasis cigarettes, because her psychological research suggested that the name—with its connotations of cool, bubbling springs—would have the greatest appeal to the orally-fixated smoker.

"Herta was graceful and gentle and articulate," Herbert Krugman, who worked closely with Herzog in those years, says. "She had enormous insights. Alka-Seltzer was a client of ours, and they were discussing new approaches for the next commercial. She said, 'You show a hand dropping an Alka-Seltzer tablet into a glass of water. Why not show the hand dropping two? You'll double sales.' And that's just what happened. Herta was the gray eminence. Everybody worshipped her."

Herta Herzog is now eighty-nine. After retiring from Tinker, she moved back to Europe, first to Germany and then to Austria, her homeland. She wrote an analysis of the TV show "Dallas" for the academic journal *Society*. She taught college courses on communications theory. She conducted a study on the Holocaust for the Vidal Sassoon Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism, in Jerusalem. Today, she lives in the mountain village of Leutasch, half an hour's hard drive up into the Alps from Innsbruck, in a white picture-book cottage with a sharply pitched roof. She is a small woman, slender and composed, her once dark hair now streaked with gray. She speaks in short, clipped, precise sentences, in flawless, though heavily accented, English. If you put her in a room with Shirley Polykoff and Ilon Specht, the two of them would talk and talk and wave their long, bejewelled fingers in the air, and she would sit unobtrusively in the corner and listen. "Marion Harper hired me to do qualitative research—the qualitative interview, which was the specialty that had been developed in Vienna at the Österreichische Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle," Herzog told me. "It was interviewing not with direct questions and answers but where you open some subject of the discussion relevant to the topic and then let it go. You have the interviewer not talk but simply help the person with little questions like 'And anything else?' As an interviewer, you are not supposed to influence me. You are merely trying to help me. It was a lot like the psychoanalytic method." Herzog was sitting, ramrod straight, in a chair in her living room. She was wearing a pair of black slacks and a heavy brown sweater to protect her against the Alpine chill. Behind her was row upon row of bookshelves, filled with the books of a postwar literary and intellectual life: Mailer in German, Reisman in English. Open and face down on a long couch perpendicular to her chair was the latest issue of the psychoanalytic journal *Psyche*. "Later on, I added all kinds of psychological things to the process, such as word-association tests, or figure drawings with a story. Suppose you are my respondent and the subject is soap. I've already talked to you about soap. What you see in it. Why you buy it. What you like about it. Dislike about it. Then at the end of the interview I say, 'Please draw me a figure—anything you want—and after the figure is drawn tell me a story about the figure.' "

When Herzog asked her subjects to draw a figure at the end of an interview, she was trying to extract some kind of narrative from them, something that would shed light on their unstated desires. She was conducting, as she says, a psychoanalytic session. But she wouldn't ask about hair-color products in order to find out about you, the way a psychoanalyst might; she would ask about you in order to learn about hair-color products. She saw that the psychoanalytic interview could go both ways. You could use the techniques of healing to figure out the secrets of selling. "Does she or doesn't she?" and "Because I'm worth it" did the same thing: they not only carried a powerful and redemptive message, but—and this was their real triumph—they succeeded in attaching that message to a five-dollar bottle of hair dye. The lasting contribution of motivational research to Madison Avenue was to prove that you could do this for just about anything—that the products and the commercial messages with which we surround ourselves are as much a part of the psychological furniture of our lives as the relationships and emotions and experiences that are

"Sorry to crash the party, folks, but all the little people that made it happen were just discovered buried in a shallow grave outside Bakersfield."

• •

normally the subject of psychoanalytic inquiry.

"There is one thing we did at Tinker that I remember well," Herzog told me, returning to the theme of one of her, and Tinker's, coups. "I found out that people were using Alka-Seltzer for stomach upset, but also for headaches," Herzog said. "We learned that the stomach ache was the kind of ache where many people tended to say 'It was my fault.' Alka-Seltzer had been mostly advertised in those days as a cure for overeating, and overeating is something *you* have done. But the headache is quite different. It is something *imposed* on you." This was, to Herzog, the classic psychological insight. It revealed Alka-Seltzer users to be divided into two apparently incompatible camps—the culprit and the victim—and it suggested that the company had been wooing one at the expense of the other. More important, it suggested that advertisers, with the right choice of words, could resolve that psychological dilemma with one or, better yet, two little white tablets. Herzog allowed herself a small smile. "So I said the nice thing would be if you could find something that combines these two elements. The copywriter came up with 'the blahs.'" Herzog repeated the phrase, "the blahs," because it was so beautiful. "The blahs was not one thing or the other—it was not the stomach or the head. It was both."

THAT MAN

Oh days given over to a fruitless
insistence on forgetting the personal history
of a minor poet from the bottom
of the world, to whom the stars or fate
granted a body that leaves behind no child
and blindness, which is a shadow and a prison,
and old age, which is death's day breaking,
and fame, which no one ever deserves
and the habit of contriving lines of verse
and an old fondness for encyclopedias
and for maps some artist's delicate hand has drawn
and for slender ivory and an incurable
longing to have Latin back and fragmentary
memories of Geneva and Edinburgh
and dates and names that slip the mind
and a fondness for the Orient, which peoples
of the miscellaneous Orient do not share
and glimmers of hope for what tomorrow may bring
and an overuse of etymology
and the iron beat of Saxon syllables
and the moon that never ceases to surprise
and that bad habit, Buenos Aires,
and the taste of grapes, of water
and of cocoa, sweetness out of Mexico,
and certain coins and an hourglass
and who, one afternoon like all the rest,
settles for these lines.

—JORGE LUIS BORGES

(*Translated, from the Spanish, by Alan S. Trueblood.*)

THIS notion of household products as psychological furniture is, when you think about it, a radical idea. When we give an account of how we got to where we are, we're inclined to credit the philosophical over the physical, and the products of art over the products of commerce. In the list of sixties social heroes, there are musicians and poets and civil-rights activists and sports figures. Herzog's implication is that such a high-minded list is incomplete. What, say, of Vidal Sassoon? In the same period, he gave the world the Shape, the Acute Angle, and the One-Eyed Ungaro. In the old "cosmology of cosmetology," McCracken writes, "the client counted only as a plinth . . . the conveyor of the cut." But Sassoon made individualization the hallmark of the haircut, liberating women's hair from the hair styles of the times—from, as McCracken puts it, those "preposterous bits of rococo shrubbery that took their substance from permanents, their form from rollers, and their rigidity from hair spray." In the Herzogian world view, the reasons we might give to dismiss Sassoon's revolution—that all he was dispensing was a haircut, that it took just half an hour, that it affects only the way you look, that you will need another like it in a month—are the very reasons that Sassoon is important. If a revolution is not accessible, tangible, and replicable, how on earth can it be a revolution?

"Because I'm worth it" and "Does she or doesn't she?" were powerful, then, precisely because they were commercials, for commercials come with products attached, and products offer something that songs and poems and political movements and radical ideologies do not, which is an immediate and affordable means of transformation. "We discovered in the first few years of the 'Because I'm worth it' campaign that we were getting more than our fair share of new users to the category—women who were just beginning to color their hair," Sennott told me. "And within that group we were getting those undergoing life changes, which usually meant divorce. We had far more women who were getting divorced than Clairol had. Their children had grown, and something had happened, and they were reinventing themselves." They felt different, and Ilon Specht gave them the means to look different—and do we really know which came first, or even how to separate the two? They changed their lives and their hair. But it wasn't one thing or the other. It was both.

SINCE the mid-nineties, the spokesperson for Clairol's Nice 'n Easy has been Julia Louis-Dreyfus, better known as Elaine, from "Seinfeld." In the Clairol tradition, she is the girl next door—a postmodern Doris Day. But the spots themselves could not be less like the original Polykoff campaigns for Miss Clairol. In the best of them, Louis-Dreyfus says to the dark-haired woman in front of her on a city bus, "You know, you'd look great as a blonde." Louis-Dreyfus then shampoos in Nice 'n Easy Shade 104 right then and there, to the gasps and cheers of the other passengers. It is Shirley Polykoff turned upside down: funny, not serious; public, not covert.

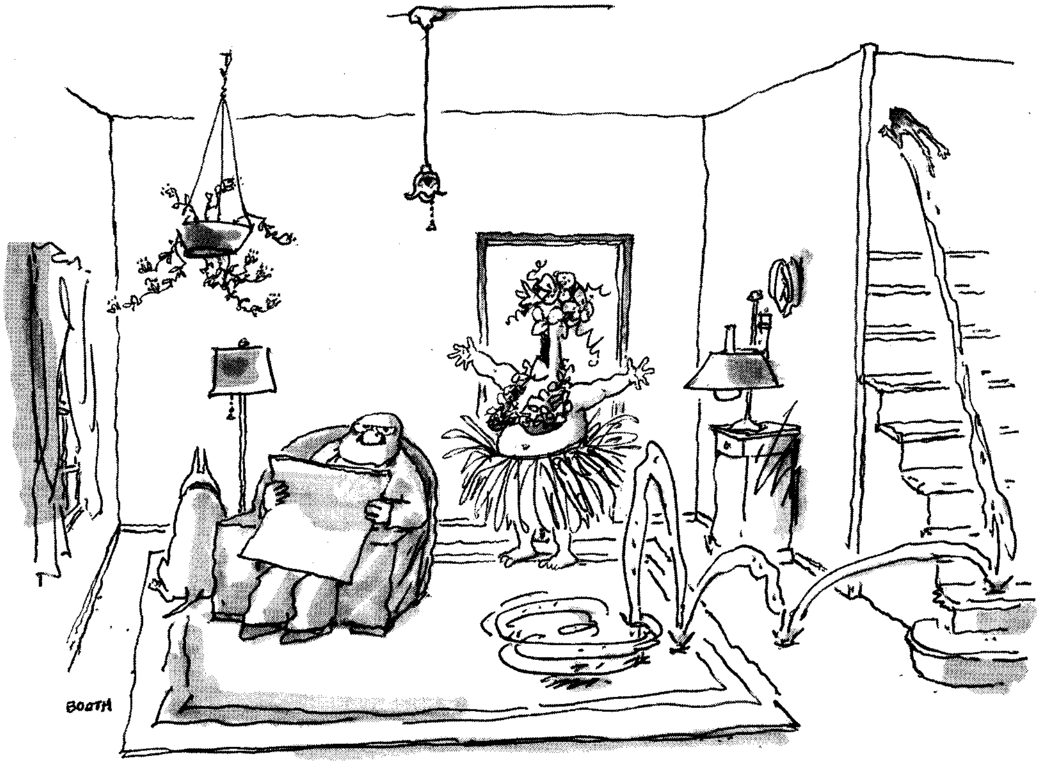
L'Oréal, too, has changed. Meredith Baxter Birney said "Because I'm worth it" with an earnestness appropriate to the line. By the time Cybill Shepherd became the brand spokeswoman, in the eighties, it was almost flip—a nod to the materialism of the times—and today, with Heather Locklear, the spots have a lush, indulgent feel. "New Preference by L'Oréal," she says in one of the current commercials. "Pass it on. You're worth it." The "because"—which gave Ilon Specht's original punch line such emphasis—is gone. The forceful "I'm" has been replaced by "you're." The Clairol and L'Oréal campaigns have converged. According to the Spectra marketing firm, there are almost exactly as many Preference users as Nice 'n Easy users who earn between fifty thousand and seventy-five thousand dollars a year, listen to religious radio, rent their apartments, watch the Weather Channel, bought more than six books last year, are fans of professional football, and belong to a union.

But it is a tribute to Ilon Specht and Shirley Polykoff's legacy that there is still a real difference between the two brands. It's not that there are Clairol women or L'Oréal women. It's something a little subtler. As Herzog knew, all of us, when it comes to constructing our sense of self, borrow bits and pieces, ideas and phrases, rituals and products from the world around us—over-the-counter ethnicities that shape, in some small but meaningful way, our identities. Our religion matters, the music we listen to matters, the clothes we wear matter, the food we eat matters—and our brand of hair dye matters, too. Carol Hamilton, L'Oréal's vice-president of marketing, says she can walk into a hair-color focus group and instantly distinguish the Clairol users from the L'Oréal users. "The L'Oréal user always exhibits a greater air of confidence, and she usually looks better—not just her hair color, but she always has spent a little more time putting on her makeup, styling her hair," Hamilton told me. "Her clothing is a little bit more fashion-forward. Absolutely, I can tell the difference." Jeanne Matson, Hamilton's counterpart at Clairol, says she can do the same thing. "Oh, yes," Matson told me. "There's no doubt. The Clairol woman would represent more the American-beauty icon, more naturalness. But it's more of a beauty for *me*, as opposed to a beauty for the external world. L'Oréal users tend to be a bit more aloof. There is a certain warmth you see in the Clairol people. They interact with each other more. They'll say, 'I use Shade 101.' And someone else will say, 'Ah, I do, too!' There is this big exchange."

These are not exactly the brand personalities laid down by Polykoff and Specht, because this is 1999, and not 1956 or 1973. The complexities of Polykoff's artifice have been muted. Specht's anger has turned to glamour. We have been left with just a few bars of the original melody. But even that is enough to insure that "Because I'm worth it" will never be confused with "Does she or doesn't she?" Specht says, "It meant I *know* you don't think I'm worth it, because that's what it was with the guys in the room. They were going to take a woman and make her the object. I was defensive and defiant. I thought, I'll fight you. Don't you tell me what I am. You've been telling me what I am for generations." As she said "fight," she extended the middle finger of her right hand. Shirley Polykoff would never have given anyone the finger. She was too busy exulting in the possibilities for self-invention in her America—a land where a single woman could dye her hair and end up lying on a beach with a ring on her finger. At her retirement party, in 1973, Polykoff reminded the assembled executives of Clairol and of Foote, Cone & Belding about the avalanche of mail that arrived after their early campaigns: "Remember that letter from the girl who got to a Bermuda honeymoon by becoming a blonde?"

Everybody did.

"Well," she said, with what we can only imagine was a certain sweet vindication, "I wrote it." ♦



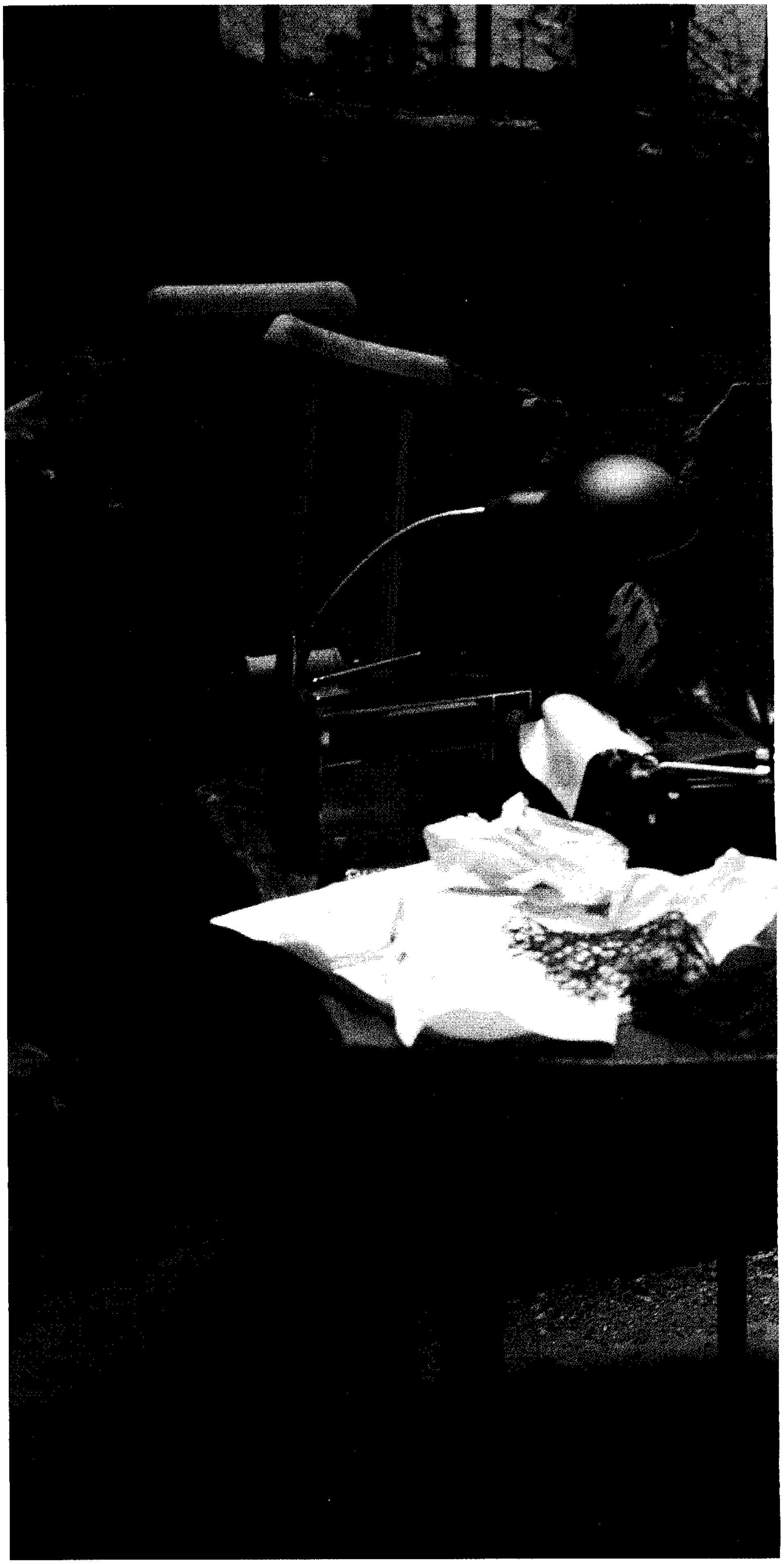
"What do you think?"

PORTFOLIO

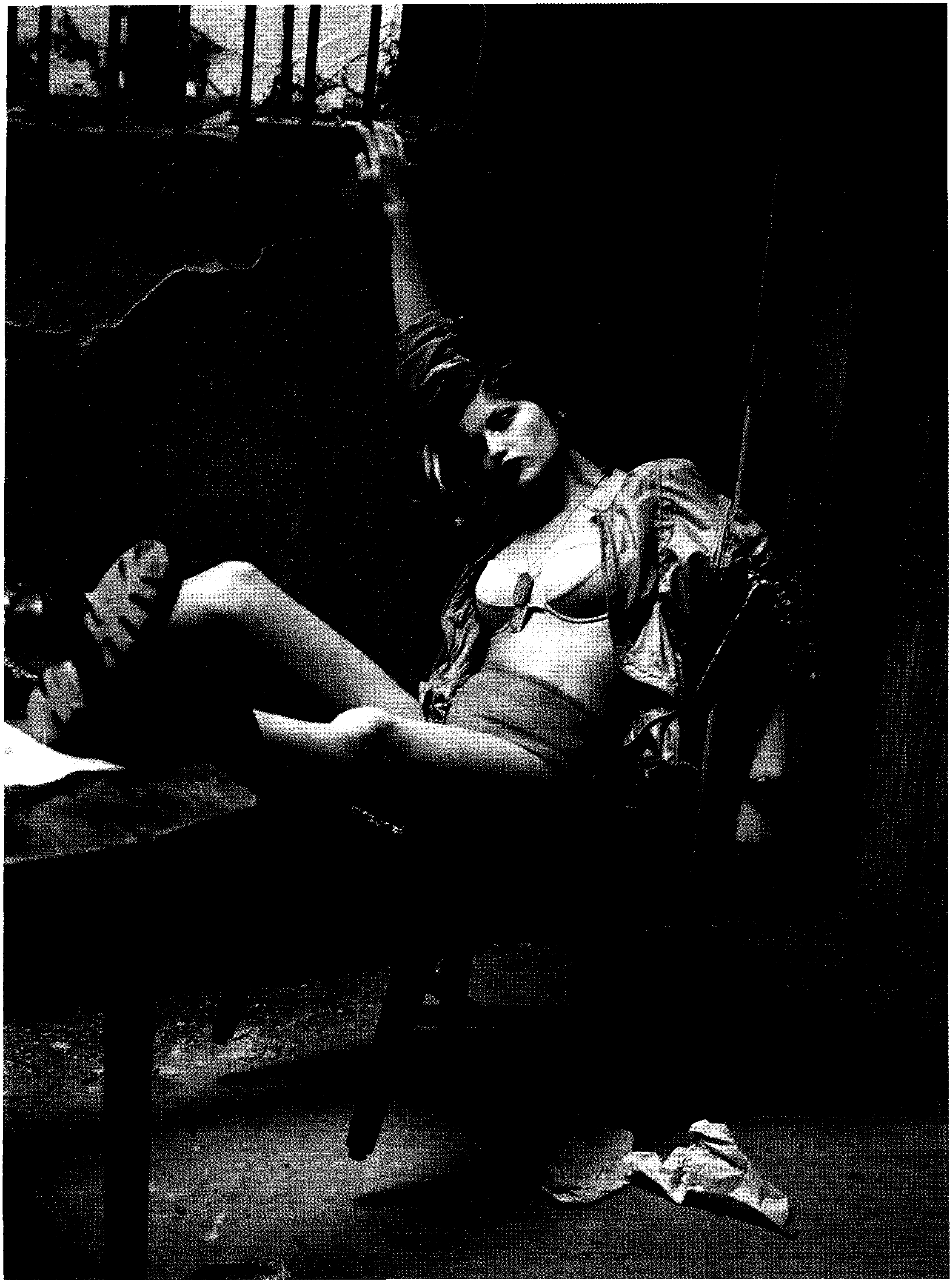
CRAVING PRIVATE RYAN

To "military intelligence" and "military music"—phrases teachers sometimes use to show the class what an oxymoron is—may be added "military fashion." The tunes and the clothes, and even some of the smarts, were all over the place at Helmut Lang's New York fashion show last month. The loudspeakers played "Land of Hope and Glory"; the models marched about in combat trousers, khaki anoraks, flight suits, and a strange bag that hangs around the body like a sling. But it's not called military anymore. It has been renamed Utility Chic, and this season it is everywhere. At the beach, one can now pop into a "tankini" (tank top plus bikini bottom, according to *Women's Wear Daily*), which comes in authentic olive drab from Ralph Lauren. For sudden showers, there are G.I.-style ponchos, by Louis Vuitton, among others. And for long treks there are surplus supplies of functional shorts from utility-obsessed quartermasters such as Prada. To field-test the current range of battle dressing, we drafted the Corsican model Laetitia Casta, whom some people regard as the most beautiful girl in the world. Ms. Casta, though only twenty, is a hardened fashion veteran. She is writing her memoirs. Any bulletins from the fashion front? "When you work with a person who doesn't understand what you can give, and they don't respect you—that, I hate it," said Ms. Casta, whose first major photo session, an Adam-and-Eve scenario, was shot when she was fifteen. "Sometimes, in magazines, I want to explain it is beautiful to be naked," she added, in charmingly accented Frenglish. Recently, at the San Remo Song Festival, in Italy, Ms. Casta danced cheek to cheek with Dr. Renato Dulbecco, who is eighty-five and a Nobel laureate in medicine. Dr. Dulbecco was reported to be keen on cloning her. —MICHAEL ROBERTS

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY HELMUT NEWTON

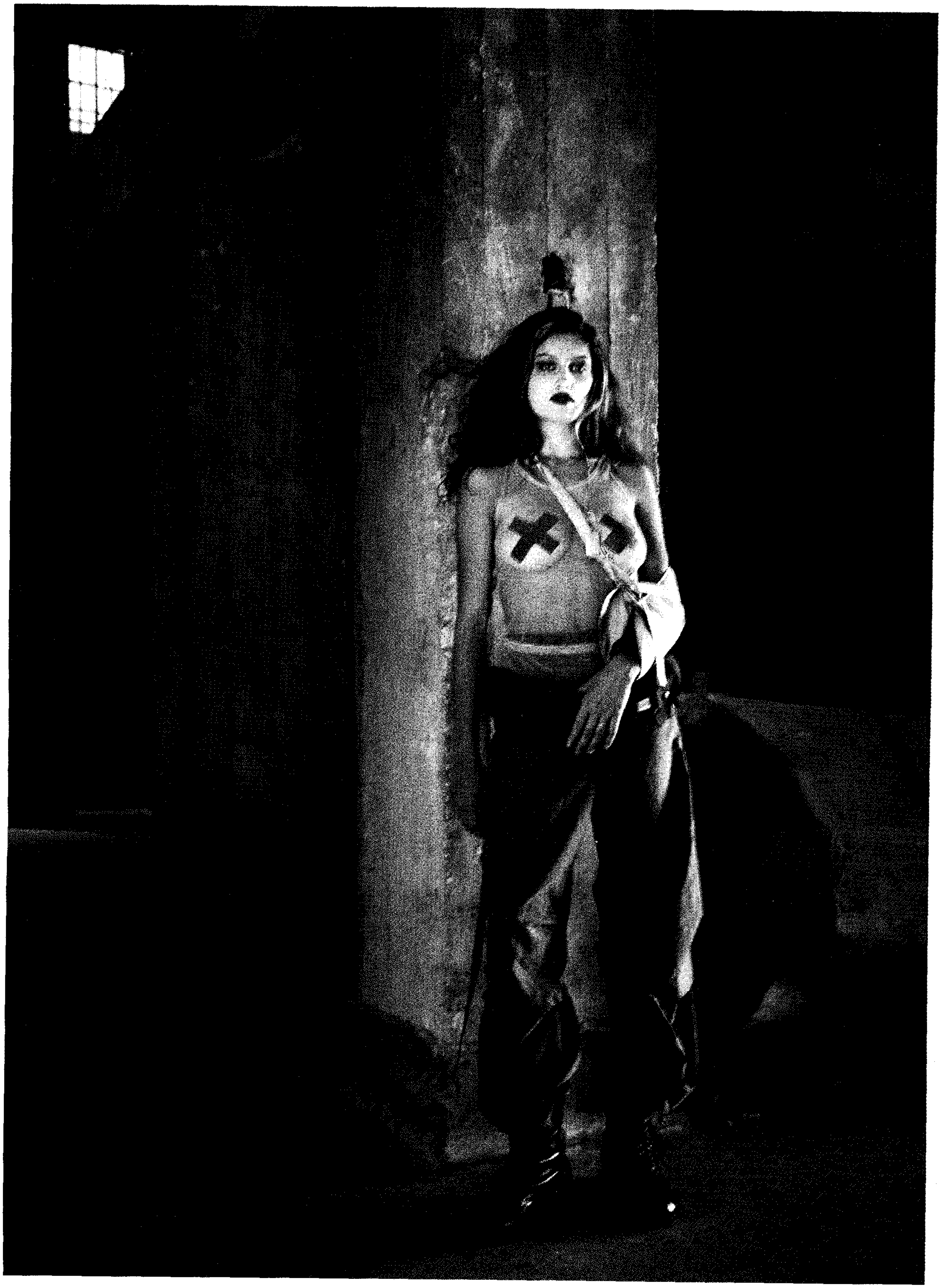


Laetitia Casta, whose book is due out this fall, seeks inspiration in the



very latest stretch shorts by Miu Miu and a bra top and parachute-silk bomber jacket by Norma Kamali.

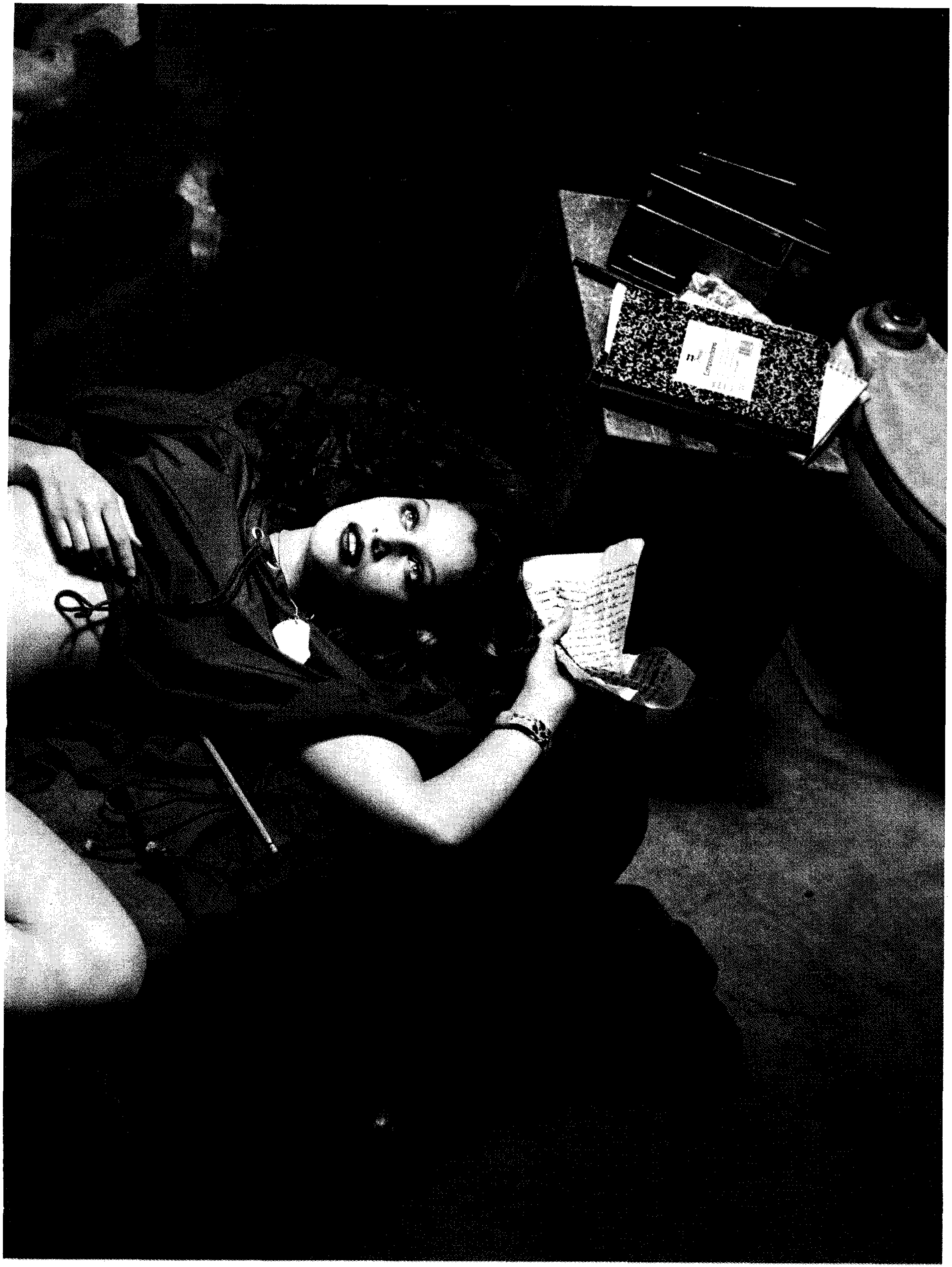
Fashion houses like Nautica and Helmut Lang recently showed multi-zippered high-tech versions of this original flying suit.



Laetitia wears a non-camouflage top by Helmut Lang, Army-surplus combat trousers, and Charles Chang-Lima's "sling" bag.

HAIR: YAMASA FOR HOPSCOTCH GREENWICH; MAKEUP: LYDIA SNYDER; STYLIST: JENNIFER HITZGES

"I'm proud to be a woman, but I don't like to be perfect," says Laetitia Casta, who is wearing



Army boots, khaki socks, and Ralph Lauren's G.I.-style silk poplin poncho and olive-drab combat bikini.

A REPORTER AT LARGE

BROOKS BROTHERS A-GO-GO

Is it too late for a venerable institution to change its pinstripes?

BY REBECCA MEAD

ONE day last January, Joe Gromek, the C.E.O. of Brooks Brothers, went on an unusual fact-finding mission to the North Carolina headquarters of a company called TC^2. There he was required to enter a changing room, strip off all his clothing, put on a pair of close-fitting gray underpants issued to him by a staff member, and step into a black-painted, windowless room measuring about ten feet by twenty. In this room, he gripped a pair of handlebars and stood stock still for eight seconds, while six light projectors illuminated him from every unforgiving angle and six cameras recorded his almost naked form.

Gromek, who is a good-looking fifty-two-year-old with sandy-gray hair, a squished-putty nose, and a wardrobe of Brooks Brothers labels, submitted himself to this undignified procedure because TC^2 is a leading innovator in the technology of body scanning. Body scanning is a process that produces a three-dimensional map, called a "point cloud," of its subject's curves and bumps which can be used to manufacture custom-fitted clothing—with, its developers maintain, less room for error than is found in the conventional tape-measure-up-the-inside-leg method. Body-scanning techniques are currently being investigated by the United States military to create customized uniforms and flight helmets, and by at least one prominent denim company to produce second-skin bluejeans that won't chafe your first skin. And body scanning is also being considered by Brooks Brothers, which since Gromek's appointment, four years ago, has been looking for ways to revamp its dreary old sack-suit image and project a more modern identity.

The idea of introducing body scanning to Brooks Brothers is the project of Joe Dixon, an Englishman who moved to America ten years ago, when Brooks Brothers had just been bought by Marks & Spencer, the British mass-market retailer. M. & S. paid what turned out to be the overinflated price of seven hundred and fifty million dollars for the American company, and Dixon, who had worked at M. & S. for five years as the technology manager, was parachuted into the old Brooks Brothers tie factory in Queens, where he oversees the production of thirty thousand ties a week. Dixon also heads the production of Brooks Brothers' shirts, which are made in two factories in North Carolina, not far from TC^2.

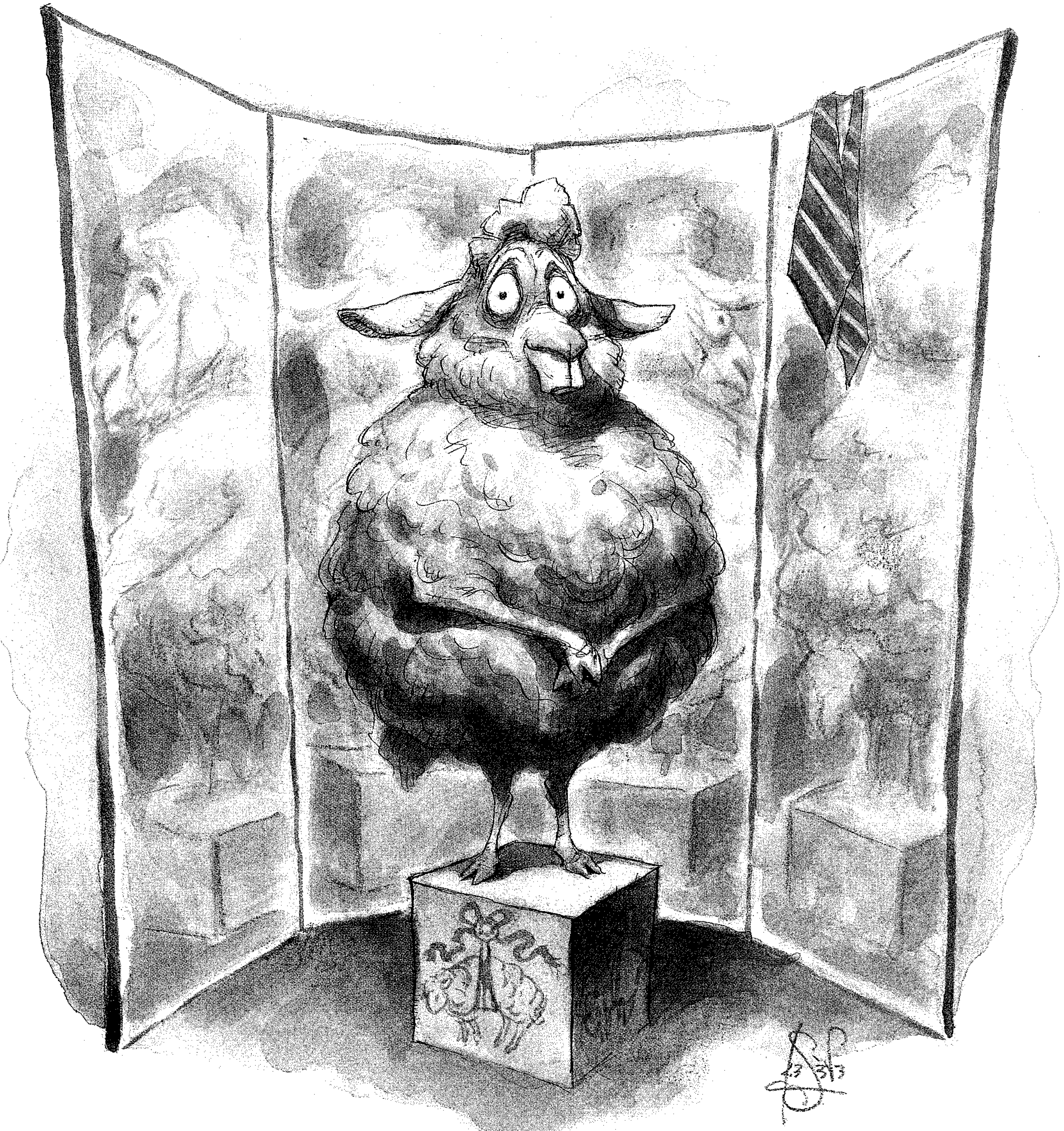
Dixon is a solidly built, lively man in his mid-thirties, and, as I learned when I visited him in Queens recently, his enthusiasm for body scanning is unbounded. "Body scanning improves the accuracy of the measuring process," he told me. "And it gives Brooks Brothers—which you associate with words like 'authentic,' 'traditional,' 'quality'—a high-tech twist for tomorrow. This is something that says, 'Hey, this isn't sleepy and old and what your granddad used to see—it's cutting-edge.' " The point-cloud data, Dixon explained, can be transmitted to a computer, which translates the information into chest and neck and arm measurements. That information can then be relayed to an automated pattern cutter, which cuts out appropriate-size sections of shirt material and puts them on a hanger. Those sections are sent through a predetermined route in the factory to be sewed and finished.

Dixon believes that body scanning is only the beginning. "If you had a magnetic card with all your body information in it, when you came into our store we could give you an electronic scanning gun," he said. "People are developing technology where you plug the card into some sort of scanning device, and as you walk up to the merchandise it talks to you. We will have coded all of a garment's fit data into a tag, so when you scan the tag with your gun it will say, 'This is nice, but not ideal for you. Try this instead.' It will guide you to things that fit you, so you don't have to waste time trying things on." Dixon's eyes shone as he conjured an image of the Madison Avenue flagship store teeming with besuited men pointing ray guns at suits, and those suits chirping right back at them—a scene out of "Are You Being Served?" meets "The Jetsons."

TALKING trousers may be a way off, though. The technology is in its infancy, and Gromek has yet to be persuaded of its suitability for Brooks Brothers: he described his body-scanning experience to me as only "one notch better than having your ankle X-rayed." But some peculiar things have been happening at Brooks Brothers in the past few years. Consider the following: lime-green and lilac polo shirts started appearing alongside the standard blue and white button-downs, with lime-green and lilac ties to match; the discreet navy shopping bags were exchanged for a new version marked with bright-blue stripes, loudly visible from blocks away; and an espresso bar, of all things, was installed on the sixth floor of the Madison Avenue store.

In many other stores, such innovations would hardly be considered revolutionary. A man in the market for a shirt and tie that make a statement can go to any number of designer stores or shirt specialists, including recent Jermyn Street imports like Turnbull & Asser and the decidedly flamboyant Thomas Pink.

But Brooks Brothers is what marketing experts call a beloved brand, which is to say that ordinary consumers have an emotional attachment to it and don't want to see it change, even if they



PETER DE SÈVE

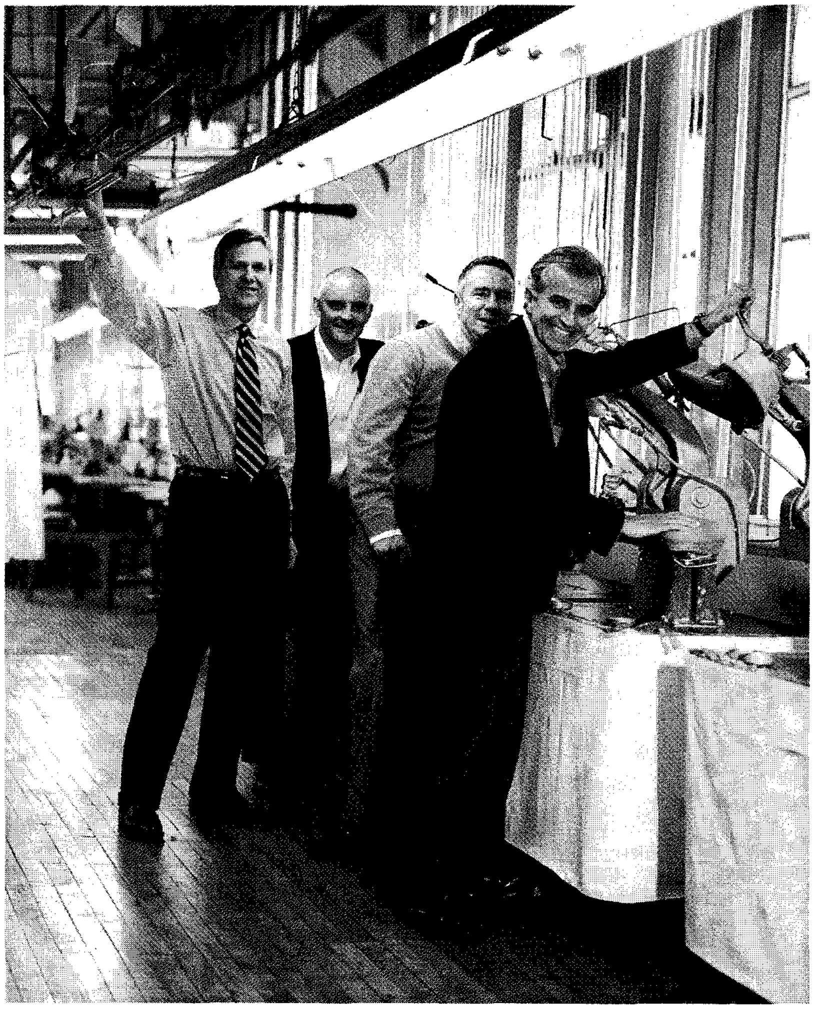
haven't bought anything there in fifteen years. In the American imagination, Brooks Brothers remains a purveyor of Cheever camouflage, the outfitter of a kind of unreconstructed suburbanite: Gregory Peck as the man in the gray flannel suit, or the "Man in the Brooks Brothers Shirt" satirized by Mary McCarthy in her 1941 short story about the Pullman-car sexual escapade of a free-thinking career girl who is stirred by the monogrammed sleeve of an otherwise unprepossessing steel executive.

The store was founded in 1818 by Henry Sands Brooks, and in 1850 it was taken over by his sons Daniel, John, and Elisha, the original Brooks Brothers. It was known for many years not just for its reliable respectability but also for occasional sartorial innovations. In 1896, John E. Brooks, the son of John, invented the button-down dress shirt after seeing the non-flapping collars on polo players. In 1830, the store was the first to sell the implausibly stylish seersucker suit. Brooks Brothers addressed the peculiarly dandyish affectations of the Wasp man: his striped shirts and rep ties and bright-colored socks. The clothier and writer Alan Flusser, in his book "Style and the Man," describes the Madison Avenue store as "the birthplace of a vestmental tradition that has become part of Americana," and writes rapturously of the tattersall waistcoats and sized French lisle hose that were available there when he was a boy. George Plimpton, who was introduced to Brooks Brothers by his father, a corporate lawyer (who was introduced to Brooks Brothers by *his* father), remembers when the sheep-in-a-sling label was covetable. "People would go there on a Saturday and buy underdrawers, and they would take the label off and put it in their suits," he says. When, in 1945, Tyrone Power was preparing to play a disillusioned First World War pilot in "The Razor's Edge," he went to Brooks Brothers for sartorial advice and asked Winthrop Brooks, the chairman of the board and a great-grandson of the founder, how a wealthy and stylish young man would have been dressed in 1920. "Let me take you right down to the sixth floor and we'll fit you out in exactly the clothes you would have worn in 1920," Brooks told him.

In recent decades, however, Brooks Brothers' dominance both as a symbol and as a business has declined. The firm surrendered the bespoke business in 1991, when it closed its Brooklyn suit factory and started farming its suit production out to contractors. The company had already been left behind by fashion when, in the eighties, Giorgio Armani reinvented the floppy, unconstructed suit in crêpey, tactile fabrics for a new kind of stylish man, who wanted to wear something that made him subtly noticeable rather than decorously anonymous. Brooks Brothers was also outflanked by Ralph Lauren, who had once been a salesman at Brooks and subsequently packaged preppiness with the impeccable attention to detail of a master forger. Then Tommy Hilfiger retranslated the same look for a younger, trendier consumer.

Meanwhile, Brooks Brothers devolved into wayward dreariness, where neither style nor lisle was to be found. (Alan Flusser's attitude toward the fallen Brooks is summed up by the sad observation that "the hosiery—one size fits all and all of it forgettable—is as devoid of any style as that carried by other mass merchandisers.") Brooks Brothers was not one of the new fashion houses, cultivating in men a desire for the latest thing, which has long been the motor that drives the women's fashion industry. But neither did it stand its preppy ground—as did Paul Stuart, which was established in 1938 as a swingier alternative to Brooks and still sells a reliable approximation of swinginess, circa 1938.

Now, under the direction of Gromek, who was previously the general-merchandise manager for Ann Taylor, Brooks Brothers is attempting to turn itself into a fashion brand—to sell men clothes they don't actually need but might simply want. If you go into the Madison Avenue store—or to the sleek new Fifth Avenue branch, which will be opening at Fifty-third Street, in May—you will not be greeted by dour ranks of blue oxford-cloth shirts and tweedy jackets. Instead, there is a souk-like array of bright-colored shirts and ties and sportswear, and blown-up photographs of gilded youths with cashmere sweaters tied around their waists and chinos flapping around their bare ankles—Brooks Brothers as envisioned by the company's new creative director, Derek Ungless, a former magazine designer who was hired a year and a half ago to clarify the company's image.


Joe Gromek, Derek Ungless, Jarlath Mellett, and Michael Scandiffio at the Brooks Brothers factory. Photograph by Max Vadukul.

The refashioning of Brooks Brothers, its executives claim, is already having the desired effect: they say that the typical customer, who was formerly in his mid-fifties, is now in his mid-forties. Nonetheless, progress has been slow: in the summer of 1998, revenues slid to their lowest levels during Gromek's tenure. Marks & Spencer, which has been roiled with financial troubles in recent months, with sales falling and market share decreasing, has let it be known that Brooks Brothers might be sold. When I asked Gromek about these reports, he said, "At this point, we are assuming that Marks & Spencer has no intention of selling the business."

The changes at Brooks Brothers have resulted in a certain amount of bewilderment and irritation among long-standing customers. "I am somewhat disturbed by these new shirts that puff up around the tie," George Plimpton says. "I guess it is a new style—they used to button down flat, and now they button down so that there is a curl on the collar. I bought one of these, and I thought, My God, they have put the buttons in the wrong place. I thought of going back and complaining."

Not that fustiness has been banished entirely. The pride of the Madison Avenue store, for example, is the new custom-suit shop, on the sixth floor, which was redesigned last year by the Los Angeles architect Barbara Barry. The place is filled with cues that are intended to imply sophistication: rich blue-and-purple striped carpeting; wooden Venetian blinds; dark-wood, Jean-Michel Frank-inspired furniture; the espresso bar. In reality, the department tends to feel overpopulated by unoccupied salesmen, and the coffee bar is sadly unattended. When a friend and I stopped by one afternoon for espresso, no one on the floor knew how to operate the machine, and all that could be rustled up was a couple of cups of aging filter coffee. Then we were offered a carton of milk that was twelve days past its sell-by date, with assurances from the salesman serving us that it had been just fine that morning.

ONE recent afternoon, Gromek assembled the senior managers of Brooks Brothers in a conference room at the Madison Avenue headquarters to discuss the look of the new store. Joining the executives were Paul Haigh, a British architect, who was also responsible for Brooks Brothers' other Manhattan store, downtown at Liberty Plaza, and Philip Cozzi, from the interior-design firm Pucci International, who is in charge of putting together the fixtures and the furniture for the new store. A blueprint of the ground floor was laid on the table, and the men gathered around it. "I am just going to toss some ideas out," Cozzi began. He pointed to a space just beyond the entrance, and said, "Here, there is a reception desk, a Jean-Michel Frank desk with a lamp."

"We don't have people sitting at desks," Gromek interrupted swiftly. "We are greeting people. This desk creates a barrier."

"That's Barneys," Michael Scandiffio, the president of retail, added dismissively.

The group discussed the economics of glass and metal versus wood fixtures ("I hope we are not building Mies van der Rohe here. This is a store, not a museum," Gromek said sharply), and they compared what they were doing with the successful tactics of other stores. They talked about Banana Republic, Giorgio Armani, and even Sephora, the new, unstuffy cosmetics chain, where customers are encouraged to play with lipsticks and fragrances before they buy. "That is the way the world is going—where people can interact with the products themselves," Gromek said.

In the plans, the place looked something like Ann Taylor, with its glass and blond wood, and something like Banana Republic, the Platonic ideal of uncontroversial American style, with its exquisitely coördinated casual clothes for men and women. The store in the plans was light and airy and inviting, and almost entirely undistinctive; it bore little resemblance to the familiar Madison Avenue flagship. Instead of the handsome, understated, limestone façade, there were huge walls of glass through which passersby could see giant blown-up images from the current advertising campaign. On the ground floor were racks and stacks of men's casual wear, and also women's wear—the new Brooks. The suits of the old Brooks had been moved upstairs.

One of the first things Gromek had done when he became the C.E.O. was to take his senior management downtown to the Lafayette Street offices of an image-consulting firm called Desgrippes Gobé. The Brooks group included merchandising and marketing people and store-operations managers; and it also included Jarlath Mellett, a young Irish-born designer, whom Gromek had hired to create Brooks Brothers' first coherent fashion collection.

The purpose of the visit was to participate in a daylong exercise called BrandFocus, which was devised by Marc Gobé—an expatriate Frenchman who had advised Gromek at Ann Taylor—and his creative director, Peter Levine. BrandFocus is a method that uses visual rather than verbal cues as a means of eliciting from senior managers their feelings about the subliminal meaning of a brand.

Essentially, the team was subjected to a madly associative Barbara Walters-style interview. Gobé and Levine asked questions like "If Brooks Brothers were a chair, what kind of chair would it be?" (A club chair, it turned out.) Levine showed Gromek and his team a series of photographs and asked them to choose the ones that seemed to be most applicable to Brooks Brothers. "We showed six images in each category, and they started to craft a portrait of the brand," Levine explained. "We said, 'What is the Brooks Brothers customer's office like?' We showed a traditional lawyer's office, but we also showed an office in a loft that was modern and had this urban feel, but had an antique desk."

The team chose the urban antiquer over the dreary lawyer, and they also chose a bottle of B.V. Cabernet as the Brooks Brothers wine, white-water rafting as the Brooks Brothers sport, and Michelle Pfeiffer as the Brooks Brothers pinup. They picked Mont Blanc as their customer's pen, the *Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* as his newspapers, and a young woman with wavy blond hair and fantastic teeth as his wife. The spirit of the newly casual Brooks Brothers guy was conveyed, the team decided, by a picture of a young man in his shirt, boxer shorts, and socks, straddling a chair back-to-front and knotting—or perhaps unknotting—his tie with a come-hither grin. A picture of John F. Kennedy, Jr., looking suave in a dark suit and a red tie, was selected to express what the executives hoped that Brooks Brothers would become. "There was that whole father-son thing with J.F.K., Jr.," Levine said. "He was a young entrepreneur, and he was certainly dashing, and really pulled off that life style. You could imagine him white-water rafting and also dressed in a gray suit, looking incredibly sexy. That turned out to be a big concept for them, adding 'sexy' to the mix."

"We kind of decided we weren't black, we were brown," Paul Sadowsky, Brooks' director of visual merchandising, says of the exercise. "Before, we were brass; now we are brushed chrome. In the past, Brooks Brothers had always been to me very Republican and very white, so with the picture of J.F.K., Jr., I was, like, *huh*?" The group chose a collection of desirable images, and defined seven "key core attributes" that were supposed to describe the new Brooks Brothers, and Levine wrote the attributes on a board with a marker: "Distinctive, Correct, Casually Elegant, Genuine, Eclectic, Smart, Sexy." The images now hang, in framed collages, on the walls of Gromek's conference room in the Brooks Brothers offices, as does a poster-size card inscribed with the seven core attributes.

"It wasn't really about change," Jarlath Mellett says. "It was, like, this is a beautiful house, but it needs tender, loving care: new plumbing, new windows. We were asking, 'What would make it a house for a modern family to live in?' " The answer, it seemed, was to make it a house that had the same kind of good-taste, no-risk fittings that all their friends' houses had. The Brooks Brothers guy, as he was revealed by BrandFocus, didn't have particularly original tastes. John Grisham's "Rainmaker" was his reading material, and "ER" was his television program of choice. He liked to smoke cigars with his pals. He liked Sam Adams beer. He was, in short, your basic white-collar, late-twenties American guy: inoffensive, sports-loving, well groomed, and bland—the type who clogs the Lexington Avenue line between the Eighty-sixth Street and the Wall Street stops during rush hour, and the bar of the Cub Room on a Friday night.

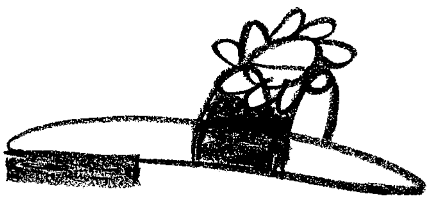
During the following months, Desgrippes Gobé got to work designing updated packaging that would embody the new spirit of the company. Those rep-tie-inspired, blue-on-blue striped shopping bags were dreamed up, and the Brooks Brothers logo was rejiggered, with the old script version ditched for a rectangular logo with block lettering. Hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of furnishings that had been bought in the early years of the Marks & Spencer ownership—chandeliers and antique tables and Oriental rugs and leather-upholstered sofas and old wooden tennis rackets—were sold to an auctioneer. A new advertising campaign was launched: it was shot in black-and-white by the fashion photographer Patrick Demarchelier and featured moody-looking young men with "Brideshead" coiffures striking movie-star poses.

Jarlath Mellett rummaged through the archives for inspiration and started producing clothes of a kind that Brooks Brothers hadn't seen in generations. "Brooks Brothers stopped being fab in the middle to late seventies," says Mellett, whose own dress sense leans toward shocking-pink cashmere turtlenecks and narrow Prada pants. "But before that it was fab—amazing. I started going to flea markets to buy old Brooks just to show people how amazing it had been: yellow terry jackets with blue stripes and old cabana sets. Really wild."

Other oddities came to light, among them the fact that Brooks Brothers didn't sell black suits, the legend being that Abraham Lincoln had been wearing a black Brooks coat when he was assassinated, and so they were then discontinued. Mellett reintroduced them, along with a range of dress shirts and sportswear in a vivid palette. "When we started doing the brightly colored shirt groups—say, an orange shirt with an orange-and-navy tie—it was interesting to see that, on the day they came out, half the corporate office would have the new orange shirt on," Paul Sadowsky says now. "It said, 'Yeah, I am with the new guys.' You could see who was willing to move forward."

If, in the fashion business, the nineteen-eighties were an era in which designers like Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, Donna Karan, and Giorgio Armani built their brands into vast, underwear-to-evening-wear conglomerates stamped with the markers of an individual designer's sensibility, the dominant fashion story of the nineties has been the revitalization and repositioning of an established brand that has been languishing. Tom Ford's reinvention of Gucci is the paradigm, but the list of brands that have been renewed, sometimes to the point of unrecognizability, is a long one. There's Hermès, and Louis Vuitton, and Prada. More recently, Burberry, the staid English raincoat maker, started putting its signature plaid on skirts and dresses, and selling leather jackets and skinny pants. Abercrombie & Fitch, formerly the clothier to the hunting-and-fishing set, has been reincarnated as a teen label, with stylish ads shot by Bruce Weber.

Conventional marketing wisdom has it that a well-established brand is best served when it exploits its familiar characteristics instead of trying to invent entirely new ones. But the familiar characteristics of Brooks Brothers—durability, timeless styling—were antithetical to the conditions of today's fashion industry. Brooks Brothers shirts may be indestructible, but Brooks Brothers needs its customers to buy new shirts every year, and certainly doesn't need them to bring their old shirts in to have the collars and cuffs turned, as still occasionally happens.



Brooks Brothers' efforts to become more contemporary have not been entirely successful: many of those bright-colored ties could be found remaindered in outlet stores a season later. And Gromek began to have second thoughts about some of Desgrippes Gobé's innovations. "I knew that we needed something that was a shock," he told me. "But we veered left of center."

In the fall of 1997, Gromek tried to straighten the course of Brooks Brothers by hiring Derek Ungless as the company's creative director. Ungless is a fifty-year-old Englishman with fashionably cropped silver hair and a hip design résumé. After leaving the magazine world, Ungless ran the marketing department at the Limited, and then set up his own consulting business, in which, among other projects, he was the creative director for Tommy Hilfiger's coffee-table book "All American."

On arriving at Brooks Brothers, Ungless began reappraising the work that Desgrippes Gobé had done. Ungless disapproved of the loud striped shopping bag, and returned to navy. "We looked at other options besides navy, because Ralph is navy; Tommy has got navy on his thing; I think the Nautica bags are navyish," he said. "Owning a color is important, and we couldn't do that. But it's O.K.: a certain degree of discretion in the presentation of the brand is appropriate in some places."

The block-letter logo was also scrapped, in favor of a slightly cleaned-up version of the old Brooks Brothers script. "In the vernacular of logo design, anything that is in handwriting always stands for trust and guarantee," Ungless explained. "That's why Cadillac is done the way it is. Our choice was probably influenced by the fashion-and-beauty trend of old things being hip again, like Kiehl's, and Acqua di Parma." The black-and-white advertising campaign was abandoned, and instead Ungless chose color shots of an ideal Brooks Brothers extended family—a gorgeous young couple having fun with their gorgeous young friends or with their small, gorgeous son in his tiny Brooks Brothers blazer.

It is Ungless's job to keep Brooks Brothers on message. There was some debate, for example, about whether it was a good thing to have won, as the company did last year, a Good Housekeeping award for the BrooksEase shirt. "When they gave us the award, the woman who handed it to us said, 'So now women will never have to iron their men's shirts again,'" Ungless said. "That's not very current or very groovy to me."

Ungless is talking about going back and rethinking the original, seven-point brand position that has provided the company with its new governing principles. "We should have three words, which is a lot better than seven," he said. The brand still lacks focus. "I read yesterday in *Wired* that 'neo-preppy' was in," Ungless told me. "So I thought, There is hope for us. But to some degree we are still searching for that—for that single 'What is it?' We are probably still preppy, not neo-preppy. I like to think that in the next year or so we will get a bit more clarity."

"Gimme a break. Being driven out of Ireland was the best thing that ever happened to you."

• •

DEREK UNGLESS recalls how, when he was at the Limited, the management undertook a brand-positioning exercise that produced an entire fictional story of the company's founding. "We all went off site for a couple of days to figure it out," he said. "We decided that the Limited was a faux-European brand based in London. It was owned by a guy named Joseph, who was English, and his Italian wife, Donatella, who was fifteen years younger than he was. They lived in Egerton Gardens, in Knightsbridge. It was a very long-winded story, right down to the color of the door of their house and the fact that they cooked on a Viking stove." Afterward, Ungless wrote the story up to serve as a reference work for the Limited staff. "People would say, 'Donatella would never let him buy that dress—she is from Milan,'" Ungless says. When Ungless gave the book to a photographer he had hired to do a Limited photo shoot, the photographer found the portrait of the company's imagined inventors so convincing that he asked Ungless if they could get together with Joseph and Donatella for dinner.

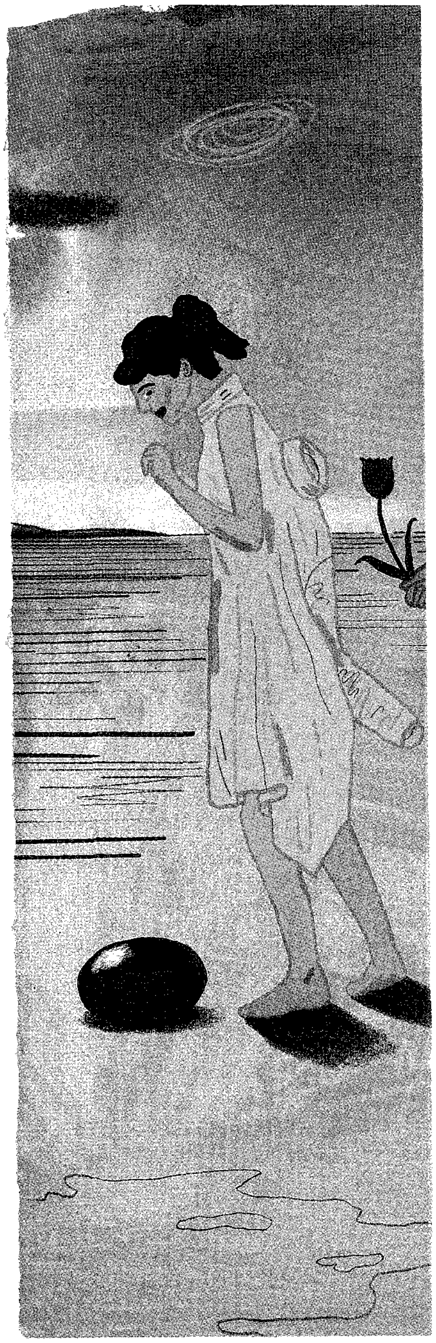
There is a crucial difference between marketing a brand like the Limited or Tommy Hilfiger and marketing one like Brooks Brothers, however. While the former are new companies with false or imagined histories, Brooks Brothers has a hundred and eighty years of real history to contend with. This does have its advantages. "We are legitimate—we didn't have to make anything up," Gromek says. "We have stories like being the first store to sell a suit off the rack, being the first store to introduce separates. Those are real stories."

In a postmodern twist, brands with fake histories can be more persuasive than those with real histories. Ralph Lauren bought the Polo trademark from Brooks Brothers twenty-odd years ago, and with it he created a simulacrum of preppiness with almost hallucinogenic vividness. Tommy Hilfiger, in his "All American" book, features, as the classic American shirt, a Brooks Brothers blue button-down oxford. Paradoxically, Brooks Brothers finds itself competing with labels that have ransacked the closet of Brooks Brothers history and have repackaged the Brooks Brothers product, but have done so without any of the mustiness that adheres to the originating brand.

The result of all this is that Brooks Brothers also has to fake it, by projecting an image of newness and modernity that is at odds with the reality of who the customer is. "We are hip!" I was told earnestly by Marvin Cooper, the head of store development. "You know, we weren't for a while, but now we are. And that is exciting to us." But, despite such assertions, the atmosphere inside the stores is still palpably uncool—as are many of the clothes, which are sold by clerks who seem to be unchanged since Cheever's day. (One frustrated Brooks executive grumbled, "When I show up at the openings of brand-new mall stores, there are a couple of crotchety old men in the clothing department, and some dumpy middle-aged woman working in the women's department.") And, although John F. Kennedy, Jr., may be the brand's ideal patron, a look around the Madison Avenue store suggests that the real customer is still probably closer to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. A party is planned for the opening of the Fifth Avenue store, at which some celebrities are expected, and I asked Derek Ungless whether Brooks Brothers was making efforts to outfit well-known figures, as Tommy Hilfiger has done so successfully. His answer was at once superlatively dry and doggedly hopeful. "We do dress well-known people," he said. "But while it is nice to dress Walter Cronkite, we need, strategically, to look for some other people." ♦

STYLE NOTE BY SIMON SCHAMA

THE DANDY DUTCH



False sleeves and fanciful ruffs: love affair with fabric. Styles (from

P. DAVIS

HERE are the words that ought to come to mind when you think of the Dutch: flamboyant, theatrical, whimsical, visionary, self-mocking, eccentric. The ready-to-wear clichés are usually of the opposite, minimalist variety: inevitable references to rectilinear landscapes, cool utilitarianism, and churchgoing. But the current generation of Dutch maximalist fashion designers—Oscar Suleyman, Keupr/van Bentm, Jeroen Teunissen and Melanie Rozema—are producing clothes that declare the victory of the fantastic over the functional. The Dutch Baroque—not an oxymoron at all—lives on into the millennium.

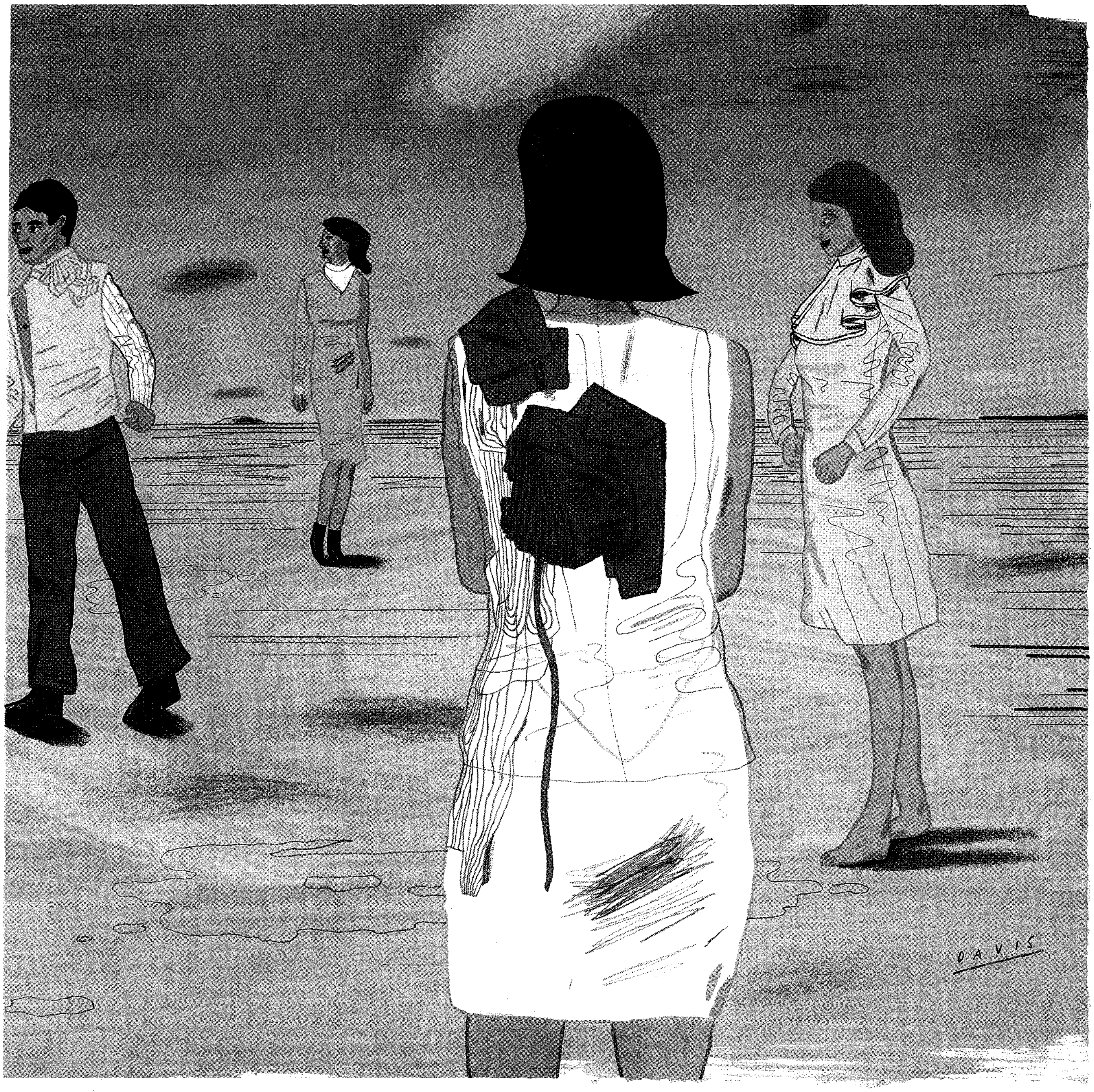
Dutch taste has long been a negotiation between austerity and extravagance. Those men in black who people the group portraits of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were simply surrendering (unlike their armies) to the international Spanish style. But the instinct for peacock display was always lurking amid the gatherings of crows. When the young William of Orange accompanied the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Charles V to announce his abdication, in 1555, both the old man and his heir (the future King Philip II of Spain) were sombrely kitted out in the black uniform of Catholic piety, while the young prince—rich, handsome, and dangerously intelligent—was a vision in a slashed doublet threaded with silver.

The devotion to exuberant display was imported in part from ducal Burgundy, which was the sovereign power in the Netherlands in the late Middle Ages, and was the last word in showy heraldry. In Catholic towns like Bruges and Ghent, this impulse found its way into the street, in parades and processions of the city guilds. In the great textile workshops of Flanders and Brabant, piety was no bar to sumptuousness: images and statues of the Virgin came swathed in yards of dazzling fabric. Antwerp, Europe's global mart in the early sixteenth century, began to import silks and rugs from Turkey, Persia, China, and Mughal India. Some of the most brilliant passages in the Met's recent show on early Netherlandish painting—the treatment of intricate gold embroidery—celebrate this unapologetic alliance between the sacred and the spectacular.

Calvinism, it's true, frowned on gaudiness as a glint in the eye of Satan, but during the eighty years' war against Spain (1568-1648) orthodox Calvinists remained a minority in the Dutch Republic. While their preachers dressed like magpies and urged God-pleasing plainness on their flocks, they were powerless to prevent the extravagance that ran through city life in Holland like so much shimmering thread. The most fantastic furniture designs in Europe, for example, came from the buzzing brain of the Mannerist Hans Vredeman de Vries. His bedposts, mantels, and chests dripped with swags and scrolls, and sprouted broken pediments against which harpies and sphinxes stood guard. Similarly, above the brick façades of canal houses in the Amsterdam of the sixteen-thirties and forties, gables began to frolic with displays of leaping dolphins, Moorish heads, and ships in full sail.

There was always an enthusiasm in the Netherlands for the exhilarating irregularity of nature. We think of the tulip as exemplifying a Dutch preference for odorless simplicity (over, say, the sensual rose). But early Dutch horticulturists took a botanical virus as a providential blessing, and the unassuming Turkish flower soon broke out in frills, multicolored stripes, and ragged cuts and tears—the same kind of happy pinking and shearing that appears in the dresses of the current Dutch designers. And if you look at the silver ewers and *tazze* that came out of the workshop of the van Vianen dynasty, in Utrecht, you encounter an art nouveau two and half centuries early: near-abstract forms that ripple and flow in mimicry of nature's secretions.

Of course, there were limits to the razzle-dazzle. The powerful were obliged to observe modesty and public decorum (much as the senators of Venice, the seat of another butterfly culture, made sure to appear in public in black). Some paintings of the rich and vain, shown disporting themselves in arbors and on terraces, can be read either as attacks on the extravagance of costume or—more likely, in my view—as celebrations of it. In one confection of this kind, painted by Willem Buytewech, a couple stands against a terrace wall, she in a dusty-rose-and-crimson number, with a high-standing collar edged in lace flowers and a false "sleeve" hanging from her arm, in almost exactly the manner of Rozema and Teunissen's dresses, while her partner is dressed from head to foot in dove-gray silk, his super-baggy breeches se-

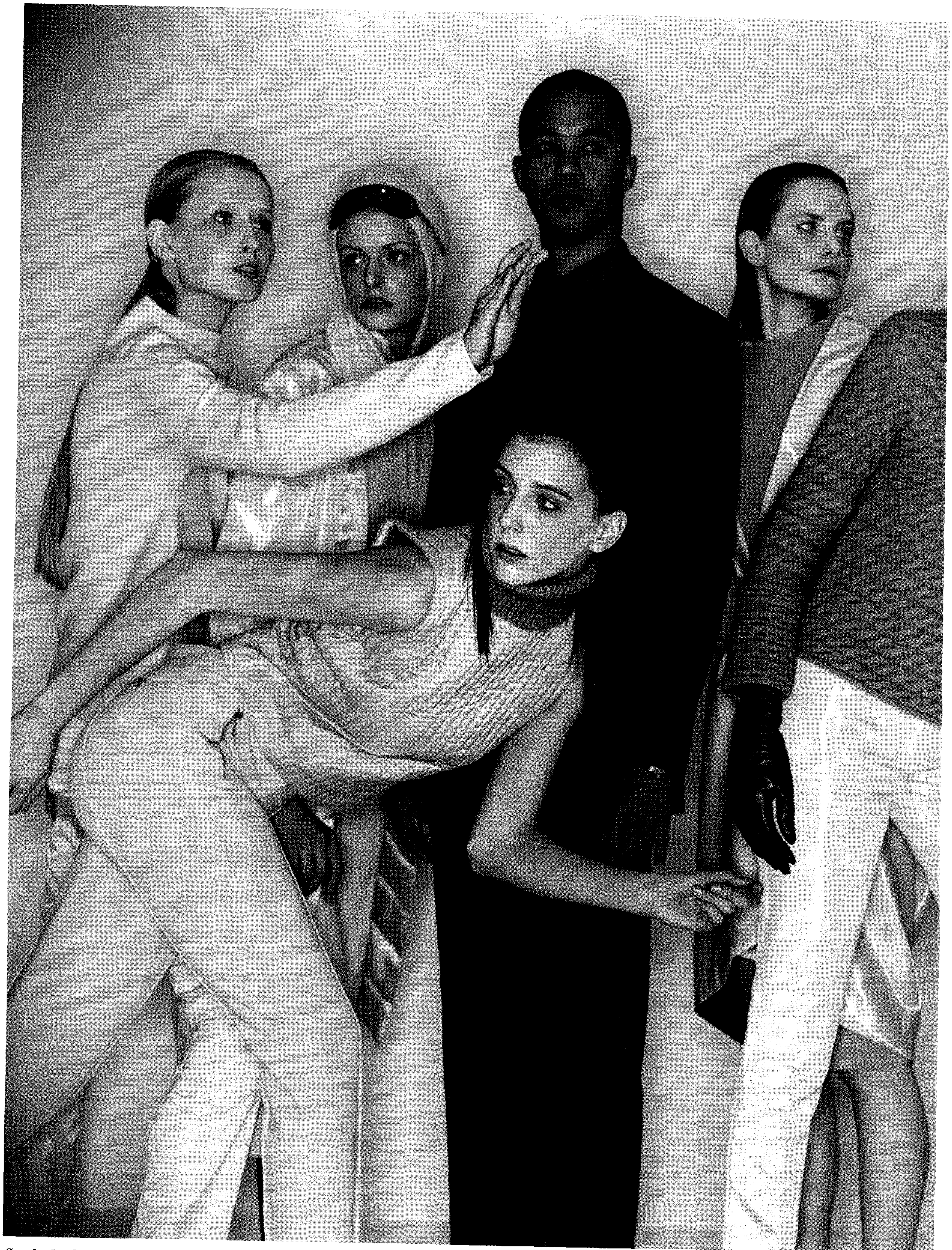


the new Dutch designs that are capturing the fashion world's attention celebrate the culture's long-standing and playful
left) by Niels Klavers; Keupr/van Bentm; Gerrit Uittenbogaard; Melanie Rozema and Jeroen Teunissen; Oscar Suleyman.

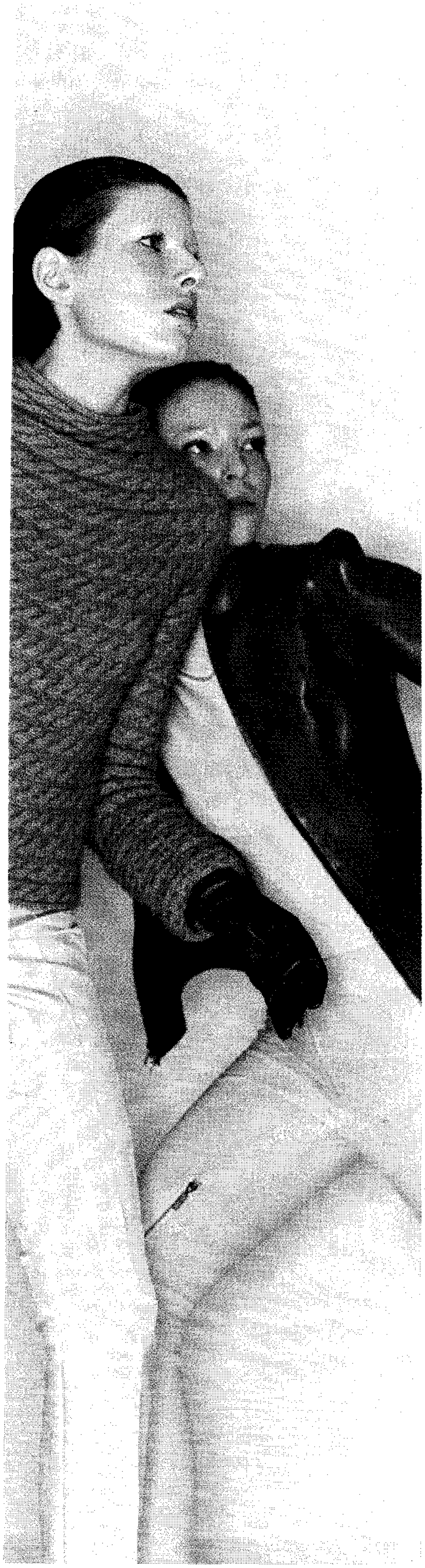
cured with black ribbons, his glossily polished shoes sporting raised pump heels and pompoms on the toes.

In his slavish attention to every frill and pleat, Buytewech was showing his skill at *stofuitdrukking*—the faithful rendering of fabric, without which no painter could hope to be a success. Even an artist who was more interested in what lay behind and within, like Rembrandt, made himself an unparalleled master of this craft: able to suggest the darkness of velvet brushed against the nap, or the electric rise of hairs on a sable trim. Arguably, no other visual culture—not even that of the Venetians—was as involved with textiles as the Dutch; it was almost as if they were fabricating them with the paintbrush. Abraham van den Tempel, a painter from Rembrandt's home town of Leiden, actually remained a cloth manufacturer while practicing as a painter, and produced three allegorical pictures glorifying the city's cloth trade. His women, who are clothed in iridescent satins and crushed velvets, or have great balloons of fabric wrapped about their bodies, in hues of hot peach and persimmon and mallard green, are about as Calvinist as the Ziegfeld Follies. High-minded critics attacked van den Tempel as a *mode-schilder*—a fashion painter. But the burghers loved him.

So when the new Dutch designers distance themselves from the past, it's only one kind of past—the nineteenth-century stereotype of starched linen, box beds, and silver skates—that they're running from. There has always been another Dutch past—one of gorgeous, unapologetic outrageousness, from which they have received an expansive inheritance. ♦



Steele, backstage at his fashion show in Milan, with models wearing clothes from his "industrial luxe" collection for fall, in fibre-optic nylon,



leather, angora, and a mink-and-wool mix.

PROFILE

DESIGNER ON THE VERGE

Lawrence Steele has a remarkable talent. Is that enough?

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

IT is exactly 2 P.M. on a grim Tuesday at the end of January, and Lawrence Steele is standing in the middle of a busy street in central London, staring furtively at the stoop of a three-story brick town house. Steele, an American fashion designer, is wearing his favorite black Jil Sander suit, chunky Prada shoes, and a slate-gray parka. He is tall, with creamy dark skin and deep-brown eyes; he looks cool, but he's exceptionally nervous. "The man's a god," Steele whispers in hushed explanation. "It's hard to have a two-hour appointment with a god."

Steele has just come from Milan to see Manolo Blahnik, the world's most famous designer of extremely expensive, extremely high-heeled shoes. Blahnik and his sister, Evangaline, have agreed to make the shoes for Steele's fall collection, which he will present in Milan at the beginning of March. Although Steele is not widely known outside the fashion community, he has been gaining attention for the past few years—thanks in part to the support of powerful people like the Blahniks and Anna Wintour, the editor of American *Vogue*. Blahnik rarely collaborates with young designers, and as Steele mounts the town-house stairs he is beside himself with anxiety and excitement.

Much as he sometimes wishes it were not so, Steele, who is thirty-five, black, and a longtime resident of Italy, is inching fatefully toward stardom. The signs are subtle but distinct. For the first time, he has been asked by a leading Italian manufacturer to design a sportswear collection, and, increasingly, fashion editors are calling him, instead of the other way around. Models like Naomi Campbell have volunteered to appear on his runway because they know that he is under the surveillance of the fashion élite, who have come to appreciate the spare luxury of his understated clothing.

Evangaline Blahnik greets Steele warmly and ushers him into the main salon, asking him about the plans for his show and listening like a concerned mother as he tells her. With severely cut gray hair, half-glasses dangling from her neck, a yellow cashmere sweater, and simple pearl earrings, she looks more like a fashionable lawyer than like someone who produces the world's most impossibly sexy line of shoes. The Blahniks work out of a small suite of rooms decorated in white and cream. Red tulips sit on a large table covered with shoes in various colors, shapes, and materials. There are five-centimetre spikes and nine-centimetre spikes. The drapes are pulled tight against the gray day; industrial lights line the ceiling; assistants dressed in black offer tea, coffee, and mineral water.

Steele begins to thank Evangaline, but she cuts him off in midsentence. "Lawrence, you know we do this only for the people we love," she says. Then she turns to me and adds, "So many people ask us to do their shows. Dozens, really. Most of them we simply turn away. But Lawrence is special." Before I get a chance to ask how, her brother walks in complaining loudly that he has a bad cold, that his hand hurts, and that his hair is messy. "Don't look at me," he says, to no one in particular. "My hair looks like a croissant." It does, sort of. But he is wearing a beautiful gray three-piece suit over a white cashmere pullover; he looks just as you would expect Manolo Blahnik to look. He starts to rant about the horrors of having to make shoes for shows in London, Paris, Milan, and New York. "I couldn't live without Italians," Blahnik says, referring to the people who make his shoes. "But they lie

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL ROBERTS

to me every single day of their lives."

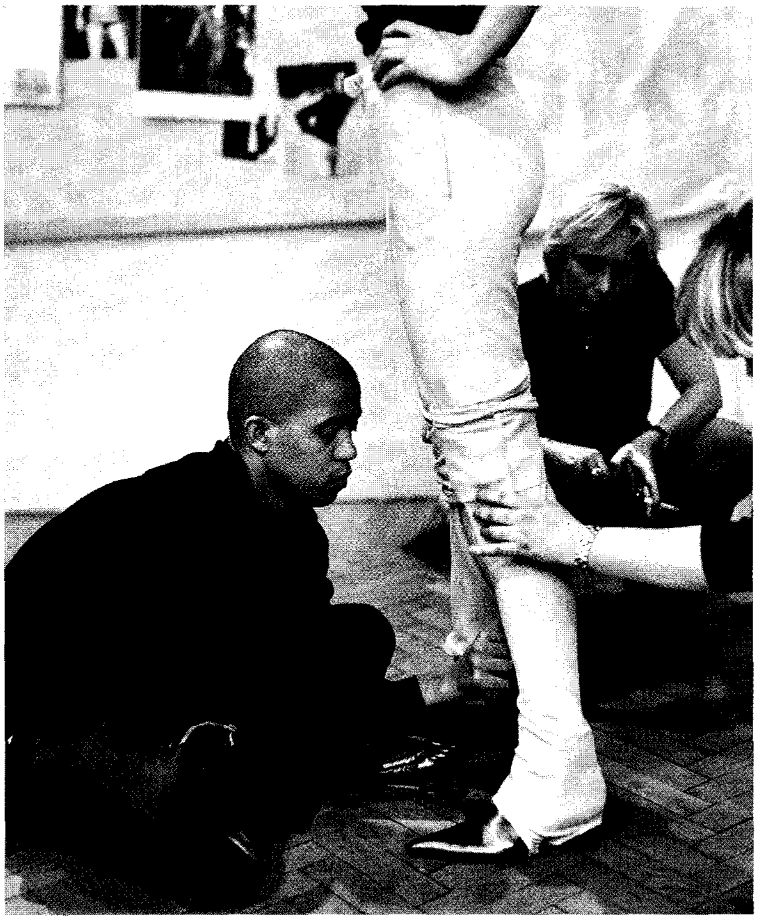
For the next hour, Steele and the Blahniks discuss colors (this season's favorites are anisette, Bengali, champagne, and graphite), fabrics, and shoe heights. They negotiate the aerodynamics of the heel, the angle of the ankle strap, and the calf width of leather boots. Steele is delighted by a shoe with pony hair. ("That is going to be so very, very hot," Blahnik tells him. "It looks like a hoof. It's so up to the minute, even beyond.") A young woman named Samantha (who Blahnik says "has perfect feet," which, in its own way, must be like hearing from Bill Gates that you write nice software) has come from the shop, nearby, to model the shoes. Steele sees a heel he loves, but he would prefer a thinner strap. Blahnik whips out his sketchpad; Steele nods in silence.

Samantha slips on a black stiletto. "Oh, please, *God,* Samantha, get it off," Blahnik screams, as if somebody had just plunged a molten rod into his eye. "I hate that shoe. It is so ugly, so hideously ugly, I can't believe I ever made it. Stop." Then she puts on a green leather sling-back. "Walk, Samantha, walk," he tells her. "When you walk in those shoes, it makes the sex sound." He makes a slow, regular clicking with his tongue. "I love that sound." After a while, Blahnik asks Steele if he can see some drawings he has brought with him. Blahnik stretches out on the floor and begins to study them as Steele watches nervously.

"Look at this!" Blahnik shrieks, after examing a sketch for a fetishistically tight black leather jacket. "This is divine, it's brilliant. It's like a fencing jacket or something from the street. My God, I love it. But it must be zipped. Zipped tight." Steele is too overwhelmed to speak. But Blahnik is in rapture. "And this!" he shouts. "These half gloves are so incredible. I'm dying. This is your best collection yet, Lawrence."

Evangaline, who has waited patiently while her brother descended into this fugue state, interrupts softly: "Mano, we have to let them leave if we want to get his shoes made. What do you want to call that new one you drew for Lawrence?"

"I want to call it the Lawrencia," Blahnik replies. "What else?" Steele blinks slowly and says nothing. The show is only a month away.



In his workroom, Steele and several assistants fit skintight ski pants.

"I'll FedEx a model to you tomorrow," Evangaline says. "Stay strong. It's going to be fine."

A heavy rain had started to fall while we were indoors. Steele didn't care. He walked right into the middle of the Kings Road. Then he turned around to look at the town house. "Manolo Blahnik named a shoe after me," he said, dreamily. "Now I can go home and die."

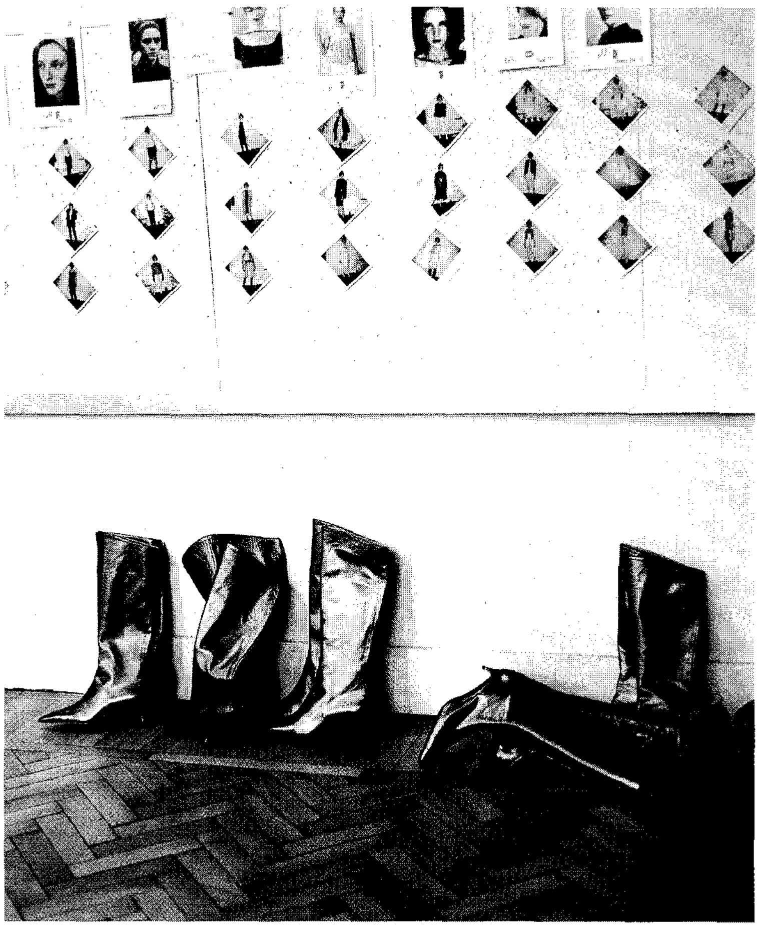
IN 1994, with support from Casor, the family firm in Bologna that manufactures his clothes, Steele produced his first collection. He had apprenticed with two of the most famous designers in Italy. For five years, he worked as an assistant to Franco Moschino. In 1990, he signed on with Miuccia Prada, just as she transformed her family's line of classic leather goods into one of the most important clothing empires of the nineties. It was a priceless education: Moschino taught Steele to stop trying to guess what women wanted and start telling them. Working with Prada was like taking a graduate course in fabrics, textures, and the minimalist approach to design which has dominated fashion for a decade. "She makes the dress, the shoes, the coat you have to have *now,*" Steele said when I asked about his old boss. "You are going to be the life of the party in Prada for exactly six months. Then that piece is over, and unless you get a new piece so are you."

Steele says that he makes his clothing to fit women, "not transvestites or mannequins," as he puts it, "but women you might actually encounter on planet Earth. I'm not part of the school of androgyny. Every designer has an ideal. Armani's vision of a woman is lean and long and architectural. For him, breasts just get in the way. My vision is different. It's glamorous, sensuous, and a little dangerous. And it includes breasts."

With fashion's traditional crucible, the spring shows, rapidly approaching, Steele was in Milan, and the scrutiny had become intense. "As much as I detest it, the show is the biggest and most terrifying thing in my life," he told me one morning over brunch at a Tex-Mex place near his atelier. He had just returned from visiting his parents, in Illinois. His father is a retired jazz musician who spent his professional life playing saxophone for the Air Force; for Christmas, his mother gave Steele the latest self-help book, "Don't Sweat the Small Stuff at Work."

"When I get back to Milan in early January, it's like I hear a gong go off," he said. "I start waking up in the middle of the night sweating and filled with fear. Sometimes I have to admit to myself how ridiculous this whole business is. I happen to love to make clothes, but that's not what this is about," he went on, his soft voice rising. "It's twenty minutes of girls on a runway. And what happens on that runway in twenty minutes is who you are. It defines you completely, and that just scares me to death."

Although Steele is popular in Italy, Germany, and Japan, he is almost unknown in America. But many of the shops that matter to people willing to spend a thousand dollars or more on a little black dress, like Fred Segal, in Los Angeles, and Jane, in New York, carry his clothes. And stars like Julia Roberts, Meg Ryan, and Minnie Driver have called to ask where they can buy them. "All these people are great," Steele said, wearily, of the eternal effort to get celebrities into a designer's clothing. "I am proud they want my clothes, and I am sure they are lovely people. But on another level, I mean, who really gives a shit? They are women who wear clothes for a living. Frankly, if I thought she really cared about the piece and wanted it I would rather see a waitress in my clothing."



Fragile leather boots by Manolo Blahnik wait to be assigned an outfit.

THESE days, American designers are nearly worshipped in Europe, where people have fallen for their simple, clean lines. Fashion culture abroad is still nourished by boutiques, which makes it easy for a young designer to display his clothes. Things haven't been as cheerful at home, though, where corporate giants like Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein dominate the industry, and retailers are more demanding and less willing to take chances. Isaac Mizrahi was only the best-known and most promising designer to close his doors last year. Todd Oldham, facing anemic sales for his line of ready-to-wear, gave it up to make jeans. Adrienne Vittadini left her business, and a number of other designers did the same. Yet many of the finest young American designers—led by Tom Ford's huge success in remaking Gucci, Marc Jacobs's leadership of Louis Vuitton, and newer transplants like Steele's friend and most obvious competitor Narciso Rodriguez, who quickly became a legend after designing the gown Carolyn Bessette wore when she married John F. Kennedy, Jr.—are succeeding in Europe. Steele is part of that trend—but there is something that sets him apart, something he hates to discuss. There hasn't been a black designer of international importance since Willi Smith, who died in 1987, and Patrick Kelly, who died three years later. Many people believe that Steele, who was raised as a Baptist and sang in his church choir, is the likeliest man to assume their mantle.

One night, we went for a late supper in a Milan restaurant favored by the fashion mob. As we entered, heads turned. Why, I asked Steele. "Because I'm a famous fashion designer," he said, more as a question, and a hopeful one at that, than as an answer. Steele's business has grown by nearly twenty per cent in each of the last three years, but he employs only ten people, and he sells no more than fifteen million dollars' worth of clothes each year. (That figure is less than Mizrahi earned last year; it's also less than Giorgio Armani makes on underwear alone.)

Steele's business manager, his friends, and even his competitors tell him that this is the moment to expand. Steele isn't so sure. "It's like if my name isn't on the side of every bus that goes by I'm a loser," he told me one day. "What is the rush? People want me to be the great black hope. Blacks want me to make it as a black man. Whites like to look at me and say, 'Hey, here is a black man who knows how to move in our society.' All I want to be is what I am, a black man with some white blood and some Jewish blood who is gay. You know, your basic, average American living in Italy."

Steele's heroes are classic designers like Madeleine Vionnet, Cristobal Balenciaga, Coco Chanel, and, above all, Charles James, who, he notes approvingly, "would rip a sleeve out of a jacket fifty times if it didn't seem right to him." Sketches by all of them line the wallboard and the easels of his atelier. The offices—which were once part of the Indian consulate—have intricately carved wooden ceilings and track lighting. Dog-eared copies of *Vogue* from every country where the magazine is published lie along the floor, on every desk, and on shelves. I noticed some pictures by Helmut Lang and Jil Sander and asked Steele what he thought of those designers. "Helmut Lang is the Armani of the new millennium," he replied. "And

Jil Sander's clothes are the best. She will give you a piece you will wear for ten years, and when you are done you are going to wrap it up and save it for your daughter."

Steele is so reserved that it is often difficult to tell what he thinks of his own work. But, when I asked him where he would be in ten years, he answered without hesitation. "It will be just as I imagine," he said. "Like Armani or Versace. There will be a giant machine pumping out these seamless collections, and I will be exactly the same, stressed beyond belief, wanting to make things better, and completely in agony over everything I am doing." Then he added, "That is, if I can bring myself to do it at all."

The issue may be resolved sooner than he would like, because the half-life of a young designer can be measured in months. In the fashion business, either you catch the wave or it drowns you. Anna Wintour senses the tension and ambivalence in Steele. "Lawrence is really on the edge right now," she told me on the telephone one day from her office in New York, taking pains to point out that she was wearing one of Steele's creations, an eighteen-hundred-dollar stretch-cashmere jacket trimmed in silver fox. "He makes beautiful, beautiful clothes. But he does need to want it. I'd have to say that if there is anything that will hold him back from becoming a huge and famous designer, it is Lawrence himself." Another editor, also an admirer of Steele's, put it more sharply: "I have to be honest. Lawrence is very, very talented. He is sincere and honest and genuinely thoughtful. But this is Milan. Extremely major people in this business are nasty and pushy and grabby. Lawrence doesn't qualify."

On my third day in Milan, I met Steele at sunrise on the vast marble steps of Mussolini's Stazione Centrale. It is one of Italy's most depressing Fascist structures, built not long after the movement was founded, in 1919. The station is so oppressively huge that nearly everyone who enters looks defeated. Steele held his own, though. Wearing gray pants, a black sweater, and one of the many dark, oversized parkas he tends to favor, he emerged from the metro in a driving rain, right on time for the train ride to Bologna, where his women's-wear line is manufactured. Steele travels to Bologna at least once a week—always on the train—to visit Casor, a firm known for its high standards if not exactly for its hipness. When he worked for Franco Moschino, Casor made some of the clothes. A few years later, when Steele was at Prada, the matriarch of the family, Gianna Cassoli, called to tell him that if he ever wanted to strike out on his own Casor would help make it happen. "That call was all the push I needed," he said, as the clouds broke over the rich, green countryside of Emilia-Romagna. "I had *no* idea what I was getting myself into. None. But I always had this vision: Lawrence Steele, designer. My middle name is Dion, and I can remember, when I was fifteen, learning about Dior. In my mind I knew then there was Dior but that one day there would be me, Dion.

"It was around then that I saw 'Mahogany,' " he said, apologizing for even mentioning the 1975 movie starring Diana Ross which convinced him that a life filled with champagne, fast cars, and an endless loop of travel between Paris and Rome was worth contemplating. "I know how aggressively uncool and stupid it sounds. But it changed my life completely. She was black. She was from Chicago, and in the movie she went to the Art Institute of Chicago," which Steele also would attend. "Around that time, there was a girl I knew who entered beauty pageants. I drew a dress, really just to make fun of her—it was completely a joke. But she had the dress made. Damn. It was panne velvet and long. I was just shocked, numb. It was like, whoa! You can draw a dress and somebody is going to make the goddam thing. Then she won the pageant. At that moment, I was hooked for life.

"Who knows where I would be if she had never had that thing made," he went on. "Maybe I would have a gas station in Rantoul"—the Illinois town where his parents now live. Instead, Steele graduated from the art institute, in 1985. Because his father was in the Air Force, he had spent much of his youth on bases in Europe, so leaving the United States didn't seem strange or difficult. "America is a planet," Steele said. "Calvin Klein is like Microsoft or I.B.M. If you are young and you want to make clothes, you have a few choices: you can be like him, you can work for him, or you can do your own thing and be a

RIGHT NOW I'M A STAY-AT-HOME DAD, BUT WHEN THE BABY COMES I'M GOING BACK TO WORK.
John O'Brien

"My goodness, Marion. Our dishes are so spotless I can see deep within my hollow, tormented soul!"

• •

New York downtown phenomenon, favored by a hundred and fifty incredibly cool people, and known by no one."

He moved, briefly, to Japan and then to Italy, because nobody produces higher-quality tailoring than the Italians. Steele has now lived in Milan for thirteen years; his Italian is fluent; and he owns a beautiful, spare penthouse apartment, which he has shared for several years with his Italian boyfriend.

I asked him if he ever felt racism in Italy. "When I got here, I was sometimes treated a little strangely," he said. "Nothing I wasn't used to, but people would look at me and say, 'Oh, wow, can we see you dance, man?' I was a curio. Then the immigration situation changed, and suddenly Africans—Moroccans and Tunisians, especially—started to arrive by the score. And people just realized I was what I was."

For a while after he arrived, Steele tried to live the dream that he had concocted for himself after watching "Mahogany." "There were times when I got a little lost, I would have to admit," he said, smiling fondly. "Even now I sometimes meet people who come up to me and say, 'Hey, I met you a few years ago in that club everyone used to go to. You were the one with no pants on.' "

Three years ago, Steele was included in a list published by *Harper's Bazaar* of twenty-one designers whom the editors had identified as "the next hotshots." A few, like the British eccentric Alexander McQueen, who designs for the house of Givenchy, and the Cypriot designer Hussein Chalayan, have flourished. Most, however, are out of business. "It's a funny thing how one designer will make it and another one will not, despite the talent," Dawn Mello, the president of Bergdorf Goodman, told me. "None of us really understand it. It's more than talent that is necessary. You need to be on fire."

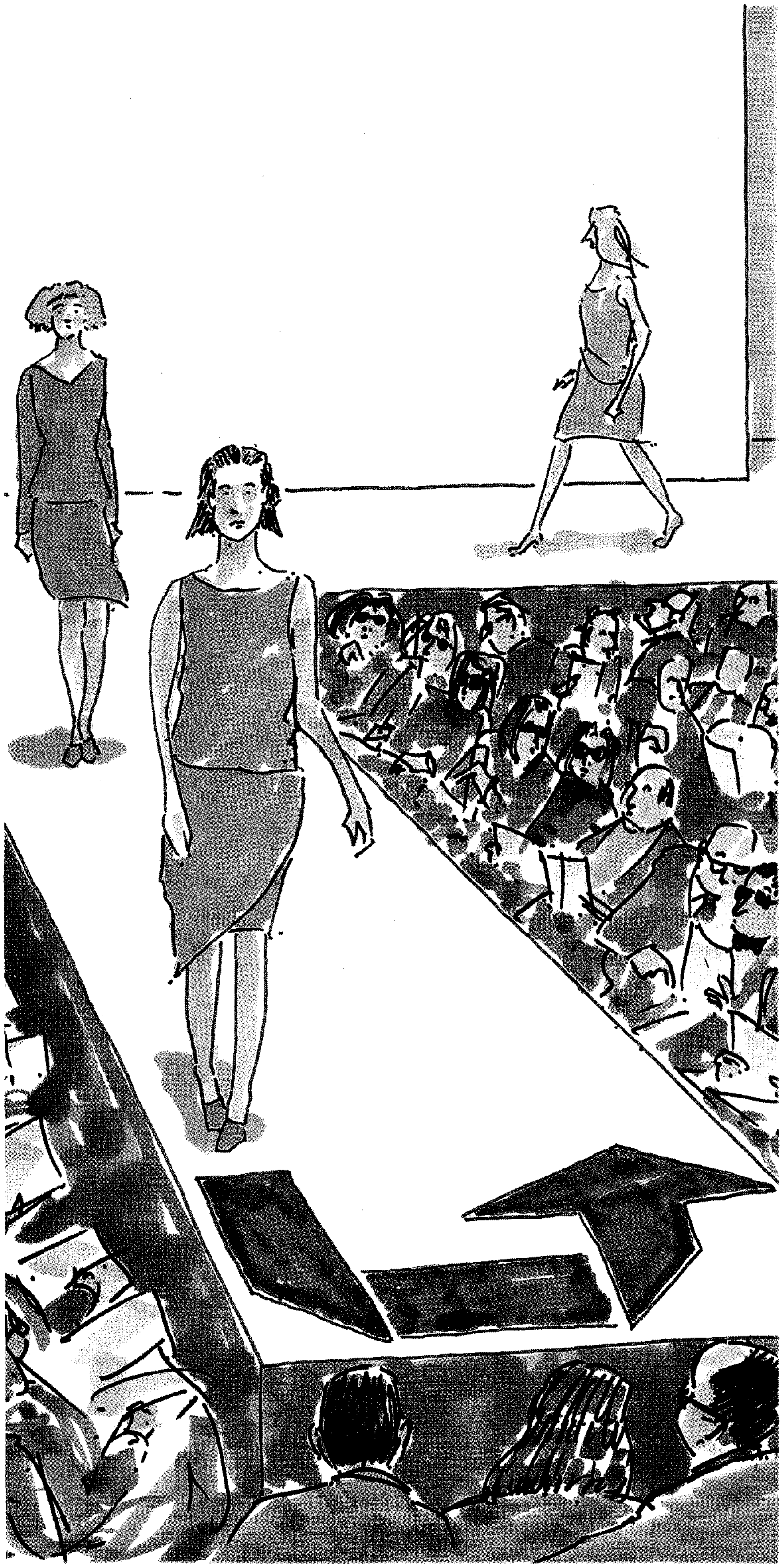
When Steele described one of the most harrowing days of his professional life—and his biggest break by far—he started to tremble. "It was two years ago," he said. "Through a friend we convinced Anna Wintour to come see my clothes. She had about ten minutes between shows. I arrived late—not a wise career move. I was sweating profusely, and I was ripping the clothes off the model, just literally tearing them right off her back, so that she could get out there and show Anna more of what I had. Anna said nothing. I was in anguish, literally wanting to die. Then she sort of smiled and left."

The next year, Wintour attended Steele's show—and she has stayed in touch with him, offering advice and support. I asked if there were other women he would particularly like to dress. "I would just die if Jodie Foster would get into my clothes," he said. "I have had a crush on her since I was six. Everything she does is so sophisticated, she has such integrity and intelligence." Then he quickly added, "But would I ever call her up and give her my clothes to advertise them, particularly in public at some event? My God, never."

BY the time we arrived at the Casor factory, Steele was tense. He had just been informed that his show was scheduled for noon on the first of March, the beginning of Fashion Week. It's the slot he wanted, but it gave him less than five weeks to design dozens of outfits, and choose and order fabrics. Then he'd have to match the colors, make certain the fabrics worked the way he intended them to, supervise the tailoring, select the shoes (and the models) to go with them all, choose music to drive what is essentially a theatrical performance, find out the true (as opposed to the public) sizes of the models, and, most important, keep a close eye on the manufacturing process, to insure that the clothing was made exactly according to his designs.

Steele also had about a month to turn out his first sportswear collection—for the highly successful Italian manufacturer Alberto Aspesi, who has also asked him to design uniforms for a new airline. Steele's knitwear, which has grown rapidly in sales over the past two years and is now sold at Bendel's, also needed immediate attention. But what worried Steele most was Casor. Al-

SKETCHBOOK BY MICHAEL CRAWFORD



though the Cassolis are great tailors and have always treated him like a member of the family, Steele felt that something was missing. "They are not moving with me," he conceded. "They still see me as that bright young assistant at Prada. When I take a two-hundred-dollar-a-metre sequinned fabric from a French company and cut it with scissors, and sew it onto a dress and just leave it sort of hanging there, it drives them nuts. They want to finish it; they want it neat. That is their view of the world. But it is not mine."

A car was waiting at the Bologna station to take us to the Casor factory. The building, on the outskirts of the city, is architecturally unusual, with oversized windows and a glass-roofed atrium. Birds are constantly killing themselves by flying into the windows and roof. Inside, it is filled with modern art: Warhols and Hockneys from the family's extensive collection.

Steele, holding a book of fabric swatches, strode into his workroom, with two assistants. A model was sitting around in tights and a T-shirt; she would spend the day trying on a variety of partially made outfits and half-formed ideas. Steele and his assistants sat at a long table with a pile of fabrics, and they tried to draw what they want the firm to make. "The seam won't hold," Kookseo Koo, his first assistant designer, told him, after Steele offered a swatch of gray cashmere that he wanted to turn into an egg-shaped coat. "It needs to be tighter." Steele grunted and asked the model to try on a tapered pair of gray pants. "Classic," Koo said, in a better mood. "An absolute hit."

Steele's success has helped the factory, which employs forty-five people, through a rough patch. Casor has other clients, but Steele is clearly its greatest hope for the future. "We have watched Lawrence grow from the beginning," Stefano Cassoli, the firm's young managing director, told me. "Each season, his collections get better. His potential is obvious." Last year, Steele accounted for about ten million dollars in sales—more than forty per cent of Casor's revenues. "We count on him," Cassoli said. "And I think he counts on us."

For lunch, we all trooped off to a giant Bolognese restaurant, where

Steele had to beg the Cassolis to hold the meal to two courses. As we ate, a television displayed the men's fashion shows from Milan. Naomi Campbell could be seen parading at the head of a line of men on the runway during the Versace presentation. "He knew how to cut a garment, and not everyone does," Steele said of Versace, shaking his head mournfully. "But it is just so gross when a designer is that present in the clothes. I have no respect for it. You should be able to look at something and say, 'Oh, what a pretty dress.' Period."

I had asked earlier, after hearing from so many people that Steele was gifted but perhaps a bit unfocussed, if he thought he had the spine necessary to make it as a major figure in the fashion world. His eyes turned to ice. He said that he would prefer to be nice, and that being nice had got him pretty far in the business. But, he said, "I am not an idiot. And I am not working twenty-four hours a day for nothing. I can be just as vicious and cutthroat as I need to be. Just because I don't enjoy it doesn't mean I won't do it.

"It would be a tragedy if I left Casor," he said, mumbling half to himself. "People could lose their jobs, the factory would be endangered. But I am beginning to think if I don't move soon I'll never move."

WHEN Giorgio Armani puts on a fashion show, he does it on a private catwalk that looks like a Noh amphitheatre, built beneath his palazzo, in the center of Milan. Lawrence Steele lives in a different world: he spends about a hundred thousand dollars to present his collection on a rented runway in Milan's convention center; he shows it when he is told to, and if people have to wait too long they leave.

Still, in early February Steele didn't have much to worry about. His show was scheduled for his favorite hour, at the start of the fall collections. And there was even better news: Madonna's stylist called. Madonna was about to make a cosmetics ad and she seemed interested in appearing in Steele's clothes.

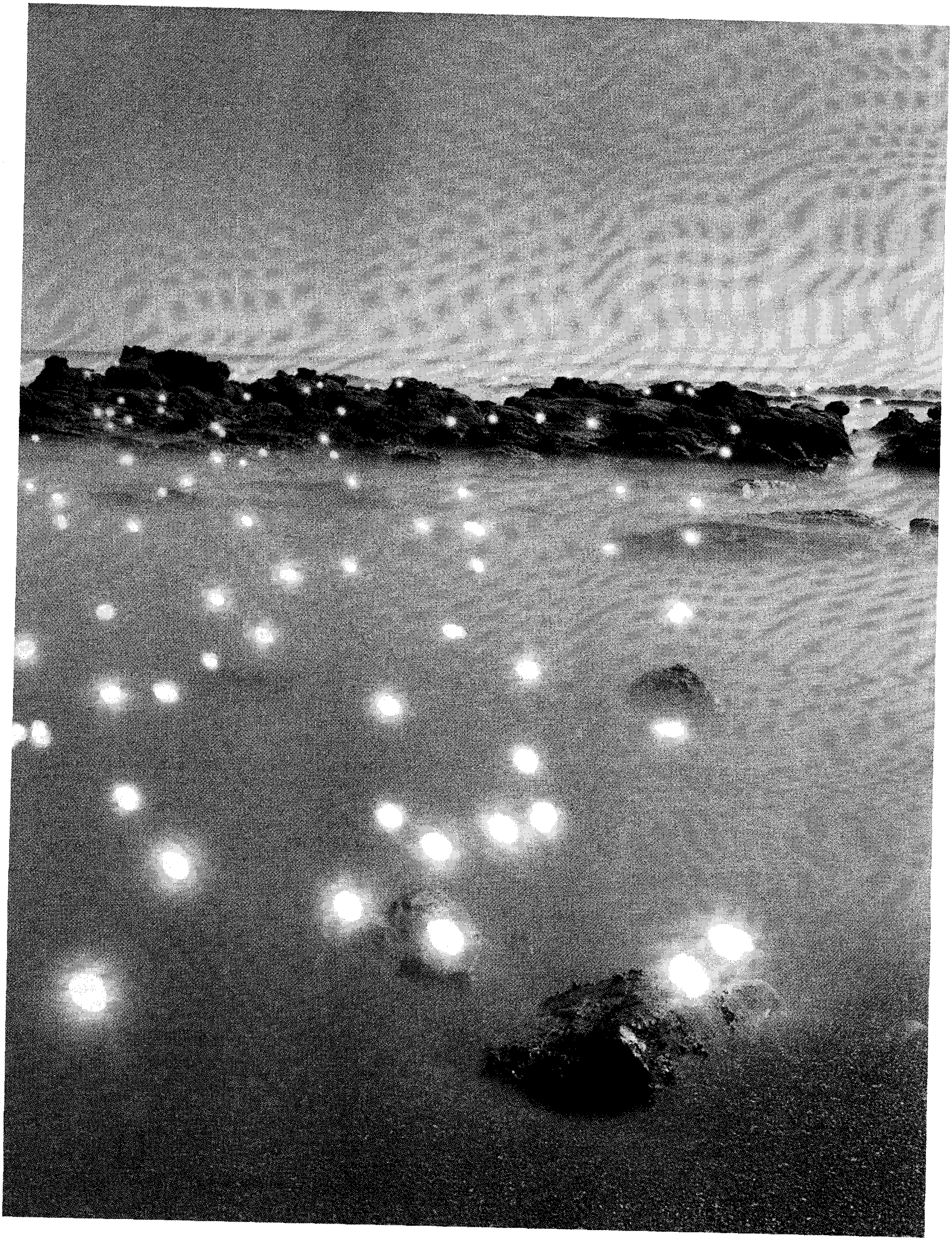
The mood soon changed. Steele learned that his friend Narciso Rodriguez, the person with whom he is most often compared, was scheduled to show immediately after him, at 1 P.M. That meant many things, all of them bad. A model can't possibly appear in shows scheduled next to each other—it takes too long to get ready. Since both designers like to use the same girls, and Rodriguez, who has a powerful backer, was able to pay more, Steele lost every one of his favorite models. But there were greater dangers. If his show started late—which is common—buyers and the press would have to decide whether to abandon Steele and race across town in order to make it to Rodriguez instead. Worse, Steele realized that if the press did write about him reporters would inevitably compare the two young expatriates. Two weeks before the show, with all this in mind, Steele said, "The pressure really got to me. And then this thing with Narciso. I just sort of crumpled." Five days before the show, he had not received a single piece of clothing from the factory; the shoes from Blahnik were beautiful, but he still wasn't sure they would match properly. He was used to working close to the edge, but this time he felt as if he were about to tumble over it.

Finally, on Friday night, the clothes appeared, along with a team of ten emergency seamstresses, who deployed their sewing machines on his desk and throughout his atelier. By this point, Steele was essentially living in the studio, watching models try on clothes, bouncing endlessly back and forth across the giant room in a wheeled desk chair. He spent the days trying to choose the right clothing to illustrate his theme of "industrial luxe"—lots of futuristic combinations, like leather bonded to cashmere, silk mixed with metal-based fabrics, neoprene and satin. There were zippers everywhere and hooded fur cowls and graphite leather gloves. "Boots," he barked at an assistant on Sunday, after she selected for a model a pair of slingbacks to go with pants. "Boots with pants. It's a law. Like 'i' before 'e,' except after 'c.'" When I asked him if he was making a little black dress, he took one off the rack and told me it was supposed to be like "a piece of scrap metal," although it costs about as much as a bridge. He left most of his delicate and feminine creations out of the show. "This event is not about clothes," he said, sternly. "This is about fashion."

BARNEY
TAXI

On Sunday night, disaster struck: the zippers on Blahnik's boots started to shred. One of Steele's employees had insisted that they be made of metal instead of Teflon, and it didn't work, as Blahnik had tried to tell the person. By midnight, the Blahniks had dispatched a workman to a factory near Milan to labor through the night to save the boots—and the show. "What kind of human being does this for a living?" Steele asked, backstage, five minutes before his show began. He was exhausted but relaxed, because it seemed that there was nothing left to go wrong. But as soon as he sent the first model into the floodlights the backstage video system failed, and, as he put it, "We lost all contact with the planet." At that point, after six months of planning, the labor of scores of people, a few dozen strategy sessions, and tens of thousands of dollars' worth of research, Lawrence Steele started to count—each time he got to fifteen he pushed another model onto the stage and hoped that it would look like a fashion show.

Somehow, it did. When he finally took his turn on the runway, walking hand in hand with Jacquetta Wheeler—one of the year's more prominent new faces, who was wearing a silver chain-mail dress and who takes every step as if she were just learning to walk—the applause was genuine and prolonged. As Steele feared, he received almost no press coverage, but early orders from buyers have been stronger than ever. Editors visiting his showroom have been pleased, too. "It's a step forward," one of them told me after examining the collection. "Not a great leap forward. But a solid step. It's impressive, but the question remains: When is he going to get more aggressive?" The night of the show, Steele celebrated at a new Thai restaurant on the desolate edge of the city, surrounded by empty buildings and silent motorways. "I am going to go home and sleep for a week," he said after dinner. "Then I am going to get up and become a fashion designer. And this time I mean it." ♦



It was the most powerful earthquake ever recorded: it tipped a continental shelf and drew back the ocean like a vast breath.

FICTION

LOOT

An earthquake uncovers a secret world.

BY NADINE GORDIMER

ONCE upon our time, there was an earthquake, but this one was the most powerful ever recorded since the invention of the Richter scale made it possible for us to measure apocalyptic warnings.

It tipped a continental shelf. Such tremblings often cause floods; this colossus did the reverse, drew back the ocean as a vast breath taken. The most secret level of our world lay revealed: the seabedded—wrecked ships, façades of houses, ballroom candelabra, toilet bowl, pirate chest, TV screen, mail coach, aircraft fuselage, cannon, marble torso, Kalashnikov, metal carapace of a tourist busload, baptismal font, automatic dishwasher, computer, swords sheathed in barnacles, coins turned to stone. The astounded gaze raced among these things; the people who had fled from their toppling houses to the maritime hills ran down. Where terrestrial crash and bellow had terrified them, there was naked silence. The saliva of the sea glistened upon these objects; it is given that time does not, never did, exist down here where the materiality of the past and the present as they lie has no chronological order, all is one, all is nothing—or all is possessible at once.

People rushed to take; take, take. *This was—when, anytime, sometime—valuable, that might be useful, what was this, well, someone will know, that must have belonged to the rich, it's mine now, if you don't grab what's over there someone else will.* Feet slipped and slithered on seaweed and sank in soggy sand, gasping sea plants gaped at them; no one remarked that there were no fish, the living inhabitants of this unearth had been swept up and away with the water. The ordinary opportunity of looting shops, which was routine to people during the political uprisings, was no comparison. Orgiastic joy gave men, women, and their children strength to heave out of the slime and sand what they did not know they wanted, quickened their staggering gait as they ranged, and this was more than profiting by happenstance, it was robbing the power of nature, before which they had fled helpless. Take, take: while grabbing they were able to forget the wreck of their houses and the loss of time-bound possessions there. They had tattered the silence with their shouts to one another, and under these cries, like the cries of the absent seagulls, they did not hear a distant approach of sound rising as a great wind does. And then the sea came back, engulfed them to add to its treasury.

That is what is known; in television coverage that really had nothing to show but the pewter skin of the depths, in radio interviews with those few infirm, timid, or prudent who had not come down from the hills, and in newspaper accounts of bodies that for some reason the sea rejected, washed up down the coast somewhere.

BUT the writer knows something no one else knows: the sea change of the imagination.

Now listen, there's a man who has wanted a certain object (what?) all his life. He has a lot of things—some of which his eye falls upon often, so he must be fond of them, some of which he doesn't notice, deliberately, which he probably shouldn't have acquired but cannot cast off. There's an Art Nouveau lamp he reads by, and above his bed a Japanese print, a Hokusai, "The Great Wave"—he doesn't really collect Oriental stuff, although if it had been on the wall facing him it might have been more than part of the furnishings; it's been out of sight behind his head for years. All these things—but not the one.

He's a retired man, long divorced, who has chosen an old but well-appointed villa in the maritime hills as the site from which to turn his back on the assault of the city. A woman from the village cooks and cleans and doesn't bother him with any other communication. It is a life blessedly freed of excitement, he's had enough of that kind of disturbance, pleasurable or not, but the sight from his lookout of what could never have happened, never ever have been vouchsafed, is a kind of command. He is one of those who are racing out over the glistening seabed, the past—detritus-treasure, one and the same—stripped bare.

Like the other looters, with whom he doesn't mix and has nothing in common, he races from object to object, turning over the shards of painted china, the sculptures created by destruction, abandonment, and rust, the brine-vintaged wine casks, a plunged racing motorcycle, a dentist's chair, his stride landing on disintegrated human ribs and metatarsals that he does not identify. But, unlike the others, he takes nothing—until: there, ornate with tresses of orange-brown seaweed, stuck fast with nacreous shells and crenellations of red coral, is *the* object. (A mirror?) It's as if the impossible were true; he knew that that was where it was, beneath the sea, that's why he didn't know what it was, could never find it before. It could be revealed only by something that had never happened, the greatest paroxysm of our earth ever measured on the Richter scale.

He takes it up, the object, the mirror, the sand pours off it, the water that was the only bright glance left to it streams from it, he is taking it back with him, taking possession at last.

And the great wave comes from behind his bed and takes him.

His name, well known in the former-regime circles in the capital, is not among those of the survivors. Along with him, among the skeletons of the latest victims, with the ancient pirates and fishermen, there are those dropped from planes during the dictatorship so that with the complicity of the sea they would never be found. Who recognized them, that day, where they lie?

No carnation or rose floats. ♦

TOKIHIRO SATO, DETAIL FROM "#299 HATACHI" (1996)/LESLIE TONKONOW ARTWORKS & PROJECTS

THE CRITICS

PATRICK OLIPHANT

BOOKS

BOY IN THE BUBBLE

George Stephanopoulos breaks out.

BY JEFFREY FRANK

THE political strategist Dick Morris, in his account of the years that he worked for Bill Clinton, observed, "The White House staff is like the moon. It cannot shine without the rays of the sun, the president. If those rays don't illuminate it, nobody knows that the staff is even there." For much of Bill Clinton's first term, the sun shone on George Stephanopoulos. He was thirty-one years old when Clinton was elected, and Bob Woodward's description of him was typical: "A handsome bachelor of 5 feet 7, Stephanopoulos had a small, almost fragile frame, set off by a big shock of dark hair. He could roll out a grand, infectious smile as needed. Well dressed, even a little self-consciously hip, he was smooth and guarded."

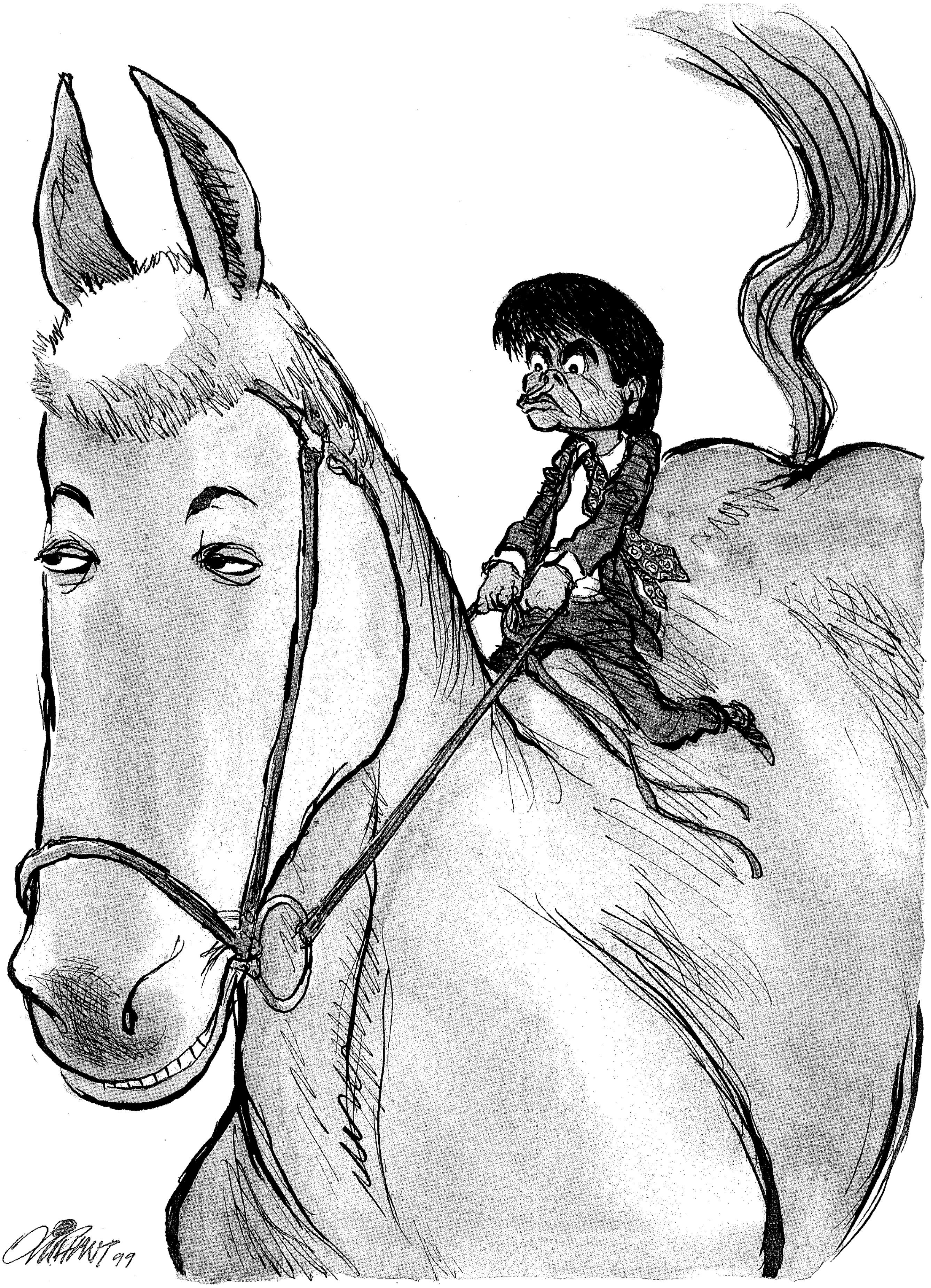
Unlike Morris, who had moved in and out of the President's life for nearly fifteen years, Stephanopoulos, a former altar boy and a grandson of Greek immigrants, had no real history with Clinton, and perhaps not much affinity for him, either. From the beginning, he was a job-seeker, and, above all, he wanted to work for a candidate who might become President. In 1988, he was a press aide to Michael Dukakis, and after Dukakis's defeat by George Bush he went to work for Richard Gephardt, who is now the House Minority Leader. Gephardt decided not to run for President in 1992, and Stephanopoulos was drawn to the governor of Arkansas, who, despite persistent rumors about women, stood out in a field that included Senator Bob Kerrey, former Senator Paul Tsongas, and Jerry Brown.

In "The War Room," D. A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus's irresistible documentary about the campaign, Stephanopoulos was Robin to James Carville's Batman. (Watching the tall, nearly bald, electric Carville stroll about with the short, fluffy-haired, worried Stephanopoulos, one almost expects "The War Room" to turn into a sitcom.) Stephanopoulos pops bubble gum when he's on the phone; he appears smitten when he speaks with Clinton, whom he refers to as "the Governor," and later wonders whether it should be "Mr. President" or "Mr. President-elect." He frets; he spins ("Bush was on the defensive, Bush was on the defensive" becomes his chant during a Presidential debate); and at the end, when victory is apparent, he confesses to a fellow war-roommate that he wept. "I appreciate this so much," he tells the President-elect on the telephone. "This was the best thing I ever did."

Stephanopoulos's episodic memoir of Clinton's first term, "All Too Human: A Political Education" (Little, Brown; $27.95), is the fourth account to emerge from the Clinton White House, the others being Morris's chilly, useful "Behind the Oval Office"; former Labor Secretary Robert Reich's occasionally fanciful "Locked in the Cabinet"; and Andrew Morton's lubricious, delicious "Monica's Story." The genre relies on proximity to people in high places, and one can always count on a few coarse details, something that Stephanopoulos perhaps too eagerly provides. Much of the territory he covers has certainly become familiar through earlier chronicles, such as Woodward's "The Agenda," for which Stephanopoulos was a prime source. (His coöperation with Woodward infuriated the Clintons, and, as Stephanopoulos writes, they never quite forgave him for it. "That Woodward's an evil guy," Clinton said once.) But Stephanopoulos is a unique witness, and his gossipy, detailed recollections give a disturbing picture not only of Bill Clinton but of the modern White House—a place of mood swings, improvisation, office intrigue, and chaos. His book is also a portrait of an ambitious Presidential aide who was a little too conscious of how he was playing.

INDEED, many people who work for politicians seem to exist in two parallel worlds—one based in reality, the second in how others are tracking that reality. "Judging how the world will judge what you do—how a position will 'play'—is an essential political skill," Stephanopoulos writes. Like the upstart Veneerings in "Our Mutual Friend," whom Dickens compared to furniture ("The surface smelt a little too much of the workshop and was a trifle sticky"), these staff people are eager to please, and Stephanopoulos, by all accounts, was determined to please not only the Clintons but the men and women who covered them—an awkward, perhaps irreconcilable position from the beginning.

Stephanopoulos began writing before the Monica Lewinsky scandal, but "All Too Human" became a different book because of it. One cannot imagine the following passage—about the days of the 1992 New Hampshire primary and Gennifer Flowers—having been written before Lewinsky: "Reading the second *Star* story, I couldn't help but assume that *something* had happened with Gen-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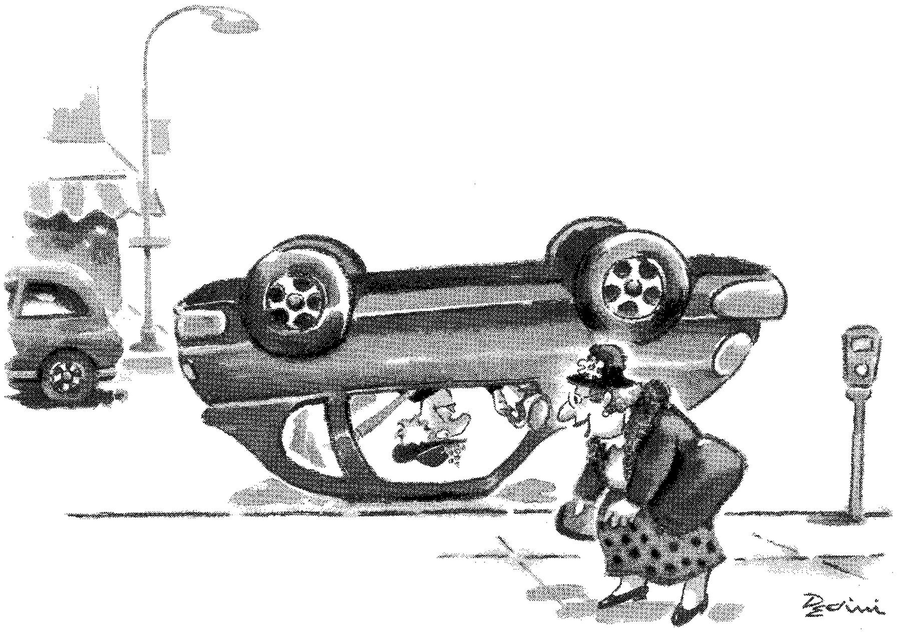


"Marie, are you still driving?"

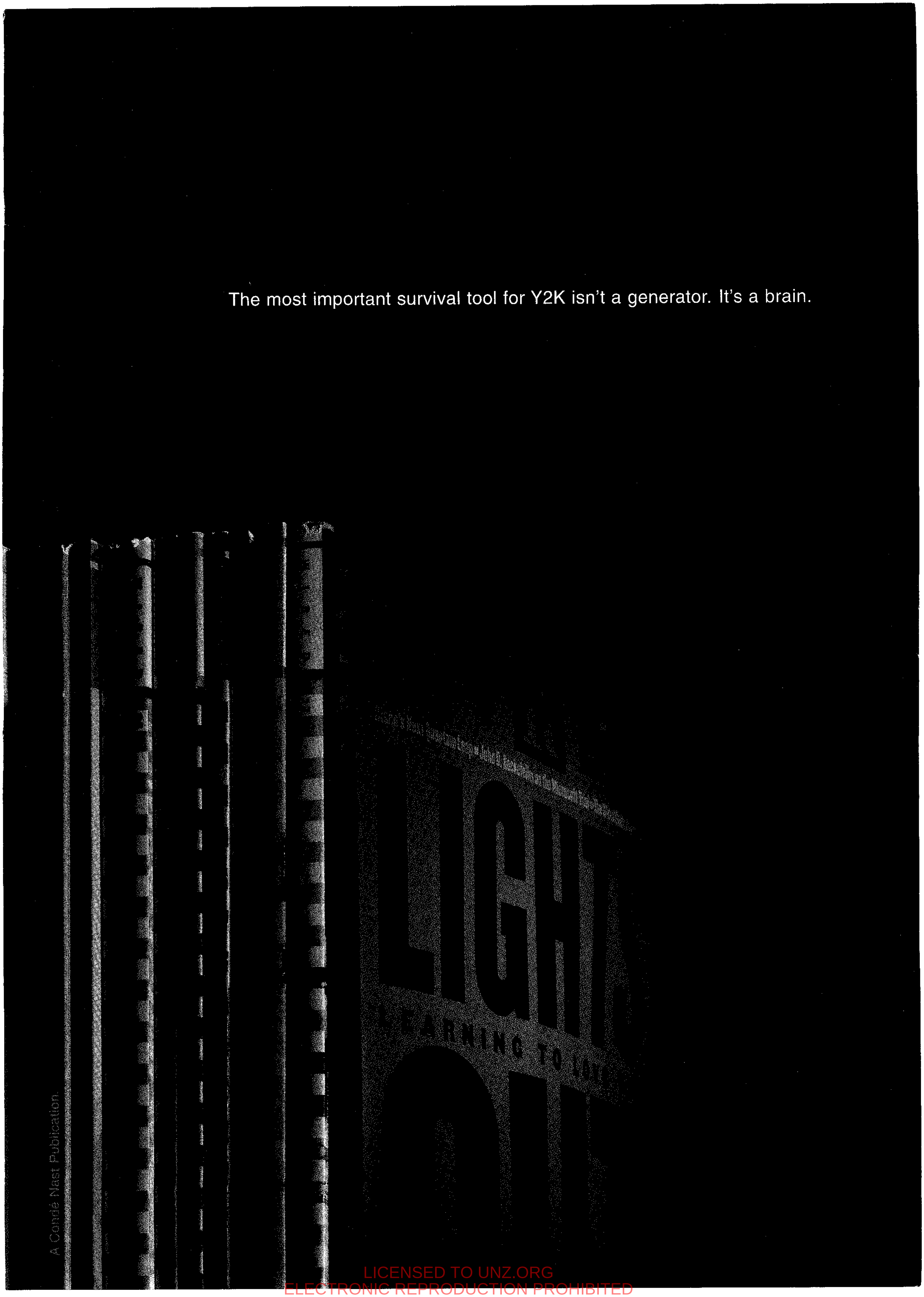
• •

nifer. When Clinton wasn't listening, James [Carville] and I speculated on exactly what that something might have been: a blow job in a car ten years ago? A one-night stand or two?" Then Stephanopoulos asks, *What about me*? "I couldn't bear the thought that an old dalliance dredged up by a tabloid would curtail the professional experience of my life, or the promise I saw in Clinton. . . . And I needed Clinton to see me as his defender, not his interrogator, which made me, of course, an enabler." Only a little later, when Stephanopoulos heard the actual Flowers-Clinton tape recordings, did he realize that he'd been deceived: "My whole torso tightened as I was hit by a wave of nausea, doubt, embarrassment, and anger. Mostly anger. *He lied.*"

At the time, to be sure, Stephanopoulos voiced none of those sentiments. When he appeared on ABC's "This Week" (where he is now a panelist), and Sam Donaldson inquired with feigned horror about Clinton's character, the aide was polished and ready: "Bill Clinton has passed his character test throughout his life and throughout this campaign. And he's shown it by his commitment to real fights. And what he's going to do in this campaign is focus on what's important to the American people on the jobs and the education. That's what the American people care about." What was really going on, he writes, was a "dynamic . . . that would repeat itself many times in the years ahead," a dynamic illuminated for him by the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr: "Frantic orthodoxy is never rooted in faith but in doubt. It is when we are not sure that we are doubly sure." For Stephanopoulos, doubts about Clinton made him focus all the more on Clinton's strengths. It became less a leap of faith than one of passion, for a cause and a person.

STEPHANOPOULOS was infatuated with Clinton. Even after he left the White House, mere proximity to the President made his "heart beat more rapidly," he writes. "My stomach floated with butterflies, the kind you get when you're walking down the street and spot a girl you lost but still love." (He also had, and apparently still has, a crush on Mario Cuomo, whom he describes as "throwing off an aura that felt like a force field.") Clinton, despite his flaws, once seemed to have such promise that comparisons with F.D.R. were being written before the first Inaugural. "We called him Secretariat, the ultimate political Thoroughbred," Stephanopoulos writes. "Most of the time I was just happy to be his stablemate, the little goat by his side who usually knew what to say and had a knack for keeping him calm."

Explaining this stallion was not easy, though, and Stephanopoulos is honest about his inability to deal with the Wash-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ington press corps. That was a curious failing, since he was famous for cultivating friendships and schmoozing with powerful journalists, and for leaking stories. Furthermore, Stephanopoulos felt drawn to the American publicity machine; he'd made his "Nightline" début when he was twenty-one—an appearance that helped get him his first political job, with an Ohio congressman. The 1992 election turned Stephanopoulos into a celebrity. As gossip columns reported that he was dating the actress Jennifer Grey, he became a sort of David Cassidy of the *Economist* set. By the second year of Clinton's term, he had been memorialized in a best-selling book by Woodward, on film, and in countless TV appearances. But he was not "playful enough from the podium," he concedes. "I failed to learn how to deflect difficult questions with humor or to develop an ironic 'wink.' "

In the spring of 1993, Stephanopoulos was replaced by David Gergen; then, he writes, he "held a relatively amorphous job that was an amalgam of political troubleshooter, public-relations adviser, policy expert, and crisis manager." In that role, he witnessed various Clintonian outbursts, some of them memorable additions to the tantrum canon. He recalls, for example, that when American soldiers were killed in Somalia Clinton vented his fury at the Somalian warlords:

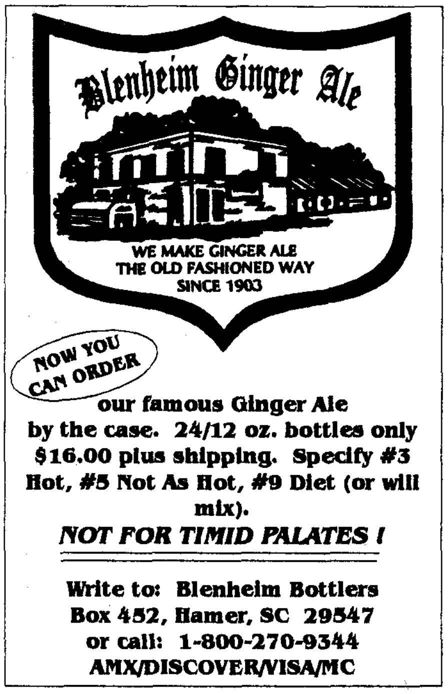
> "We're not inflicting pain on these fuckers," Clinton said, softly at first. "When people kill us, they should be killed in greater numbers." Then, with his face reddening, his voice rising, and his fist pounding his thigh, he leaned into [the national security adviser] as if it were his fault: "I believe in killing people who try to hurt you, and I can't believe we're being pushed around by these two-bit pricks."

After a time, Stephanopoulos writes, he came to see Clinton as "the master of the public smile that masks private rage." But though he was able to shrug off Clinton's yelps, he confesses that he was shaken when Hillary Clinton let him have it for what she saw as his unwillingness to do battle in the Whitewater investigation. "If you want us to fight, Hillary, we will," Stephanopoulos remembers saying. "We can beat this back. But it will take all our time, all our staff resources, and, most important, all our political capital, which we need every bit of to pass health care." His answer, though, did not satisfy the First Lady:

> Whatever I said was exactly wrong. Tears stung the corners of her eyes, and I imagined Hillary's fear-induced fury—at the Republicans for trying to destroy health care by destroying her, at the press for its small-minded, obsessive scrupulousness when issues affecting real people were at stake, at her husband for getting her into this stupid land deal with his shady friends in the first place and then expecting her to clean it up . . . at herself for letting the situation spiral out of control. All of that fury, for a moment, was directed at me.
>
> "You *never* believed in us. In New Hampshire, it was just me and Susan [Thomases] and Harold [Ickes] who believed in us. If we wouldn't have fought, we would never have won. *You* gave up on us. . . ."
>
> She paused, her voice fell, and Hillary started to cry. "We were out there all alone, and I'm feeling very lonely right now. Nobody is fighting for *me*."

Stephanopoulos's interior thoughts (the book is punctuated by Walter Mittyish monologues) are of wounded fury: *"How could she say that? Nobody's fought harder for them. I'm the most loyal staffer they've ever had. . . . Fuck her."* The aide was becoming depleted and despondent, and as he gives us yet another look at these four years one is struck by how much of it, large and small, was a parade of horribles. The shorthand version might read: Zoe Baird; gays in the military; Kimba Wood; Lani Guinier; Waco; Somalia; the two-hundred-dollar haircut; sacking the White House travel office; Clinton's lost-and-found half brother; Vince Foster's suicide; health-care reform; Whitewater, which led to the independent counsels Robert Fiske and Kenneth Starr; the Paula Jones lawsuit; the rise of Newt Gingrich. It seems almost overdue when, in 1995, Stephanopoulos starts taking the anti-depressant Zoloft. Even as the White House seemed less powerful, the aide felt his relevance waning.

IF this were a play, the third act would open with the arrival of Dick Morris, code name Charlie, whom Clinton called on for help after the Democrats lost the House in 1994. Stephanopoulos's Morris is a man of vampiric night—"the dark buddha whose belly Clinton rubbed in desperate times," he writes in one of his best passages. "He was a small sausage of a man encased in a green suit with wide lapels. . . . His blow-dried pompadour and shiny leather briefcase gave him the look of a B-movie mob lawyer, circa 1975—the kind of guy who gets brained with a baseball bat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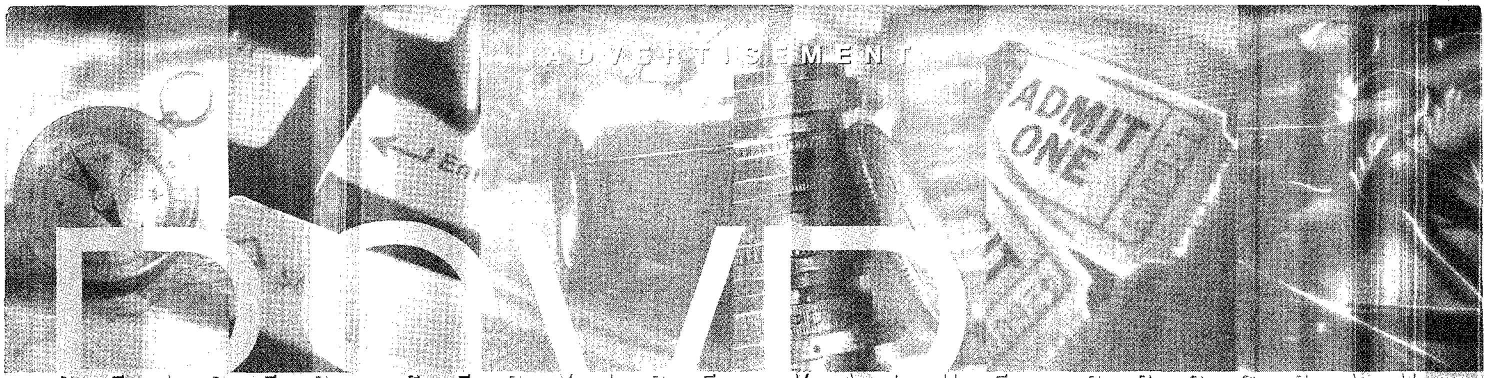

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For more information, log on to www.newyorkermarketingsite.com for double-crossing his boss." (Morris, in his book, was more cordial: "George is well known for his untamed bangs, very fine and jet black. He is short, bright, and thirty-something. . . . He wanted to be the first to know anything.") By this time, the agenda had shifted from passing programs to fending off the enemy; there were battles between the White House and Congress over the budget, and battles within the White House over issues like welfare reform. Before Morris and Stephanopoulos were done—and before Morris resigned in disgrace, in the summer of 1996—they had become allies of convenience while wholly distrusting each other and despising each other's politics.

That, anyway, was the view of this weary, medicated aide. Yet one wonders if Stephanopoulos's obsession with tracking events hadn't begun to eclipse those events. During that period, after all, the White House did manage an interim Middle East agreement; a peace in Bosnia; a ban on assault weapons; and an economic plan that many credit with the nation's extraordinary current prosperity. Stephanopoulos inhabited a claustrophobic world; you get the sense that his White House never felt quite ready to take a place in history's queue, especially when it came to foreign policy. Why, for example, did we invade Haiti in 1994? No doubt there was a measure of self-interest (in discouraging immigration), but America's motives were also democratic and idealistic. Stephanopoulos, though, seems to have been more concerned with how it played: "Taking a lonely stand on a tough issue like Haiti was the best way for Clinton to demonstrate presidential character." Clinton, in this account, had precisely the same, modern instinct; when members of Congress called to complain about the political cost of an invasion, he said, "After those fucking phone calls, I guess we'll have something to show those people who say I never do anything unpopular." Was the invasion really no more than counter-programming to these people? Even in the midst of the Haiti business, when Stephanopoulos got to take part in a *real* war room, it felt to him almost like make-believe: "Something about watching grim-faced officers with medals on their chests and spy photos under their arms hustle through hushed corridors helped me imagine what it must have been like to be Ted Sorensen during the Cuban missile crisis."

Stephanopoulos is no Ted Sorensen. He doesn't belong in the tradition of White House confidant—he was never what Major Archie Butt was to Theodore Roosevelt, or what Louis Howe was to F.D.R., or even what Robert Hartmann was to Gerald Ford. He is, rather, the dramaturge, always conscious of stagecraft. ("The people around us watched Cuomo and me talk in a way that made me feel as if we were actors in a silent movie.") Dick Morris, in his memoir, tells of an affecting speech that Clinton gave at Georgetown University after the Oklahoma bombing. After that same speech, Stephanopoulos finds himself wondering, "Where's the news peg, the sound bite?"

STEPHANOPOULOS'S book says that Clinton's Presidency was undone by a character defect, but he knows that he himself has become "a poster boy for betrayal" of the man who created him. Who could better rebut this sort of thing than a student of spin? "All Too Human" not only records Stephanopoulos's crisis of conscience but *performs* it. In his move from the war room to the greenroom, Stephanopoulos became, as he puts it, a "non-person" at the White House; and to those who have accused him of faithlessness Stephanopoulos, who has learned the value of the strategic concession, says, "There was just enough truth in each of the charges to get to me."

Love dies hard. When the President, on January 26, 1998, shook his finger at the nation and said, "I never had sexual relations with that woman," Stephanopoulos writes that he watched the performance "with a kind of fascinated disgust." He goes on, "This was Clinton at his cold-blooded worst. Gone were the guilty tics of his past denials—the downcast eyes, the stutter, the dry throat and pale face that displayed a sense of shame and sorrow and vulnerability. Now, full of self-righteous fury, he was lying with true conviction. All that mattered was his survival. Everyone else had to fall in line: his staff, his cabinet, the country, even his wife." The political had become personal; Clinton had betrayed him. The sun's bright rays had given way to the pale fluorescence of hatred. ♦

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BRIEFLY NOTED

WHILE I WAS GONE, by Sue Miller (Knopf; $24). "Why did it have to be another secret?" Daniel asks his elusive wife, Jo, toward the end of this richly detailed, ambiguous novel. Decades ago, Jo left a first marriage, assumed a new name, and found her way to a Cambridge commune, which broke up after a housemate's unsolved murder. She is settled again—echt New England farmhouse, career as vet—until Eli, a pal from her Cambridge days, makes an unexpected appearance. Guilt and retribution, Miller's familiar themes, are the story's fault lines, and yet Jo's self-absorption makes its outcome less engrossing than it might be.

PUSHKIN'S BUTTON, by Serena Vitale; translated from the Italian by Ann Goldstein and Jon Rothschild (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $30). This inquiry into the bizarre events that led to Pushkin's death, in a duel with a young Frenchman in love with the poet's wife, reads at times like dispatches from the scene and at times like a plot that the Master himself might have invented. Vitale's playful and evocative investigation is a valuable contribution to the scholarship on Russia's great literary prophet, but it is also a gripping narrative that can stand on its own.

SHOW ME A HERO, by Lisa Belkin (Little, Brown; $25). After a federal judge ordered the forced desegregation of the City of Yonkers, in 1985, a few hundred minority residents of public-housing projects were chosen, in an open lottery, to move into new digs on the white side of town. Belkin chronicles, perhaps too assiduously, the years of bitter, fruitless protest and political squabbling that followed the judge's order, but her commitment pays off: when the lucky names are finally picked from a bingo drum in a school gym, the reader can't wait to see whose dreams will be realized.

A UNIT OF WATER, A UNIT OF TIME, by Douglas Whynott (Doubleday; $23.95). The lure of building wooden sailboats in an age of high-tech racing machines becomes explicable (and then some) in the course of an extended visit with the craftsmen and the master designer, the late Joel White, in one small Downeast boatyard during the construction of an exquisite seventy-six-foot sloop. White, whose simplicity and clarity of line reflected that of his father, E.B. White, is recalled in almost reverent terms, but the book is cheerful in its portraits of men engaged in work that satisfies in its difficulty, elegant details, and infallibly stirring results.

THE YEAR 1000, by Robert Lacey and Danny Danziger (Little, Brown; $23). This enchanting, informative book recalls the heyday of Anglo-Saxon culture, when England, under assault by the Vikings, was weakly led by King Ethelred the Unready. The authors are candid about what are now considered shortcomings; the economy, for example, was based on slavery. But they also appreciate the Anglo-Saxons' achievements, among them administrative efficiency and the rule of law.

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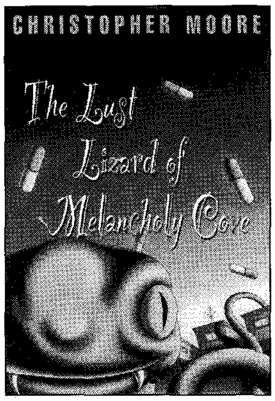
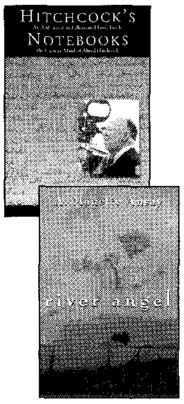
If it weren't for our cultural fascination with sin and sinners—and with spiritual redemption, on the flip side—our popular entertainment might well consist of endless rehashes of "Bambi" and "Little Women."



The novelist who pioneered the "yuppie-meets-shaman New Age Western" and "South Seas adventure on acid" genres now takes a stab at wanton reptilian carnality. **Christopher Moore**, who has previously led us to *The Island of the Sequined Love Nun* and other sublimely outrageous locations, introduces us to his latest comic literary creation, ***THE LUST LIZARD OF MELANCHOLY COVE***. This book might best be described as Godzilla meets *The Bridges of Madison County*. It is the rather twisted tale of a small California community turned inexplicably libidinous—and of the giant sea beast named Steve who is drawn there by his own twin passions for l'amour and Mississippi blues. In short, it's classic Chris Moore—and therefore in a class all by itself.

Alfred Hitchcock's ability to create suspense and on-screen tension remains unsurpassed to this day. His fascination with the evil that men—and women—do, and how he worked his exquisite dark magic, are examined in **Dan Auiler**'s ***HITCHCOCK'S NOTEBOOKS***—a book that combines rare, never-before-published excerpts from the director's journals, archives, and production notes with detailed interviews with the writers and key production personnel on some of "Hitch's" most memorable films. The result is an in-depth look into the unique working methods and mindset of a cinematic genius that enables us to witness the master's entire creative process, step-by-step.

A. Manette Ansay's novel ***RIVER ANGEL*** deals with the tragic drowning death of an unloved ten-year-old boy in the small town of Ambient, Wisconsin, and the "miraculous" occurrence that follows: the discovery of the child's lifeless but still warm body a mile away from the river. In this moving and powerful tale of faith and faithlessness, the award-winning author of *Vinegar Hill* and *Sister* walks the narrow line between what we know is possible and what we long to believe is true.



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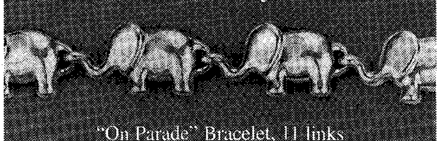

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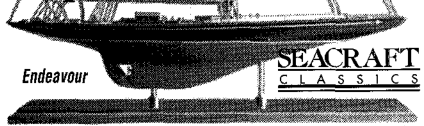

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THE ART WORLD

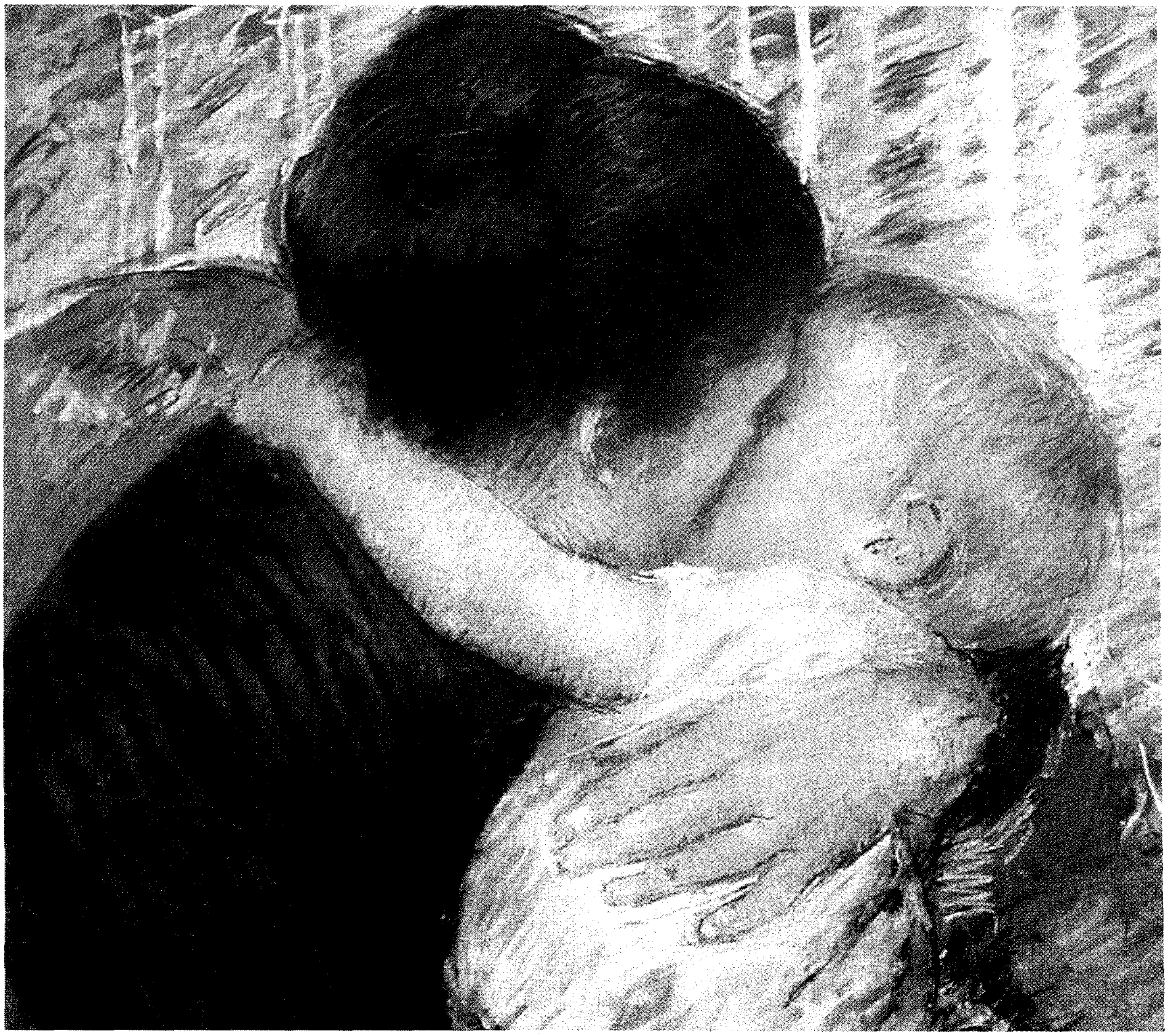
CASSATT'S CHILDREN

The woman who quietly changed painting.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

By now, the nineteenth-century American painter Mary Cassatt has become, like that other, earlier Mary, almost too well known as the pioneer in her field. First of all her sex, rock of the faith: Cassatt, the only woman image-maker between Betsy Ross and Grandma Moses whose name most museumgoers recognize, is the Madonna of American art—a painfully perfect woman, with the entire weight of women's work in American art on her shoulders. A new retrospective of her work—it began at the Art Institute of Chicago, opened last month at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and will end up in June at the National Gallery in Washington—is even called, a little too typically, "Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman." (The show has an excellent catalogue, edited by Judith A. Barter.) Although the title is fairly taken from a mural-painting project, it uncomfortably underlines her role as an icon. Cassatt is a Modern Woman, not an American Painter, and in an unbelieving age the first thing most of us feel when we see an icon is the desire to see it broken. ("But she's such a boring painter," an American woman painter wailed in private recently, boxed in by her reverence.)

Even Cassatt's admirers, in the twenty or so years since her art was revived by the first wave of feminism, have discovered that she is a hard filly to run successfully in the saintly-victim stakes. She came from an arrogant old-money family—her favorite brother became the



"Mother and Child" (1880) is one of the few works of nineteenth-century art that can fairly be called radical, in its declaration

head of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and looked like a cartoon of capital in a union newspaper—and her life, though earnestly feminist, was also flecked with all the prejudices of her class. (Of Leo and Gertrude Stein's habits as collectors she remarked that they were "not Jews for nothing.") Even worse for our pieties, the most obvious sign of her commitment to women's rights was her desire to make pictures of mothers with babies. "Tea, clothes, and nursery," one modern (male) critic sniffed. "Nursery, clothes, and tea."

And yet her art and her life, seen close up, are not only more moving than one might expect but far more courageous. Cassatt had modest talent, but she was infinitely brave. Of all the American artists in Europe in her time, she was the only one to leap right off the diving board into the frog pond, while everyone else was wading in the shallows. And, drawing on a variety of sources—Quattrocento painting, Degas's example, her own maiden-aunt gift for empathy—she was the first to grasp the modern condition of mother and child. She discovered, or recorded, a new emotion in the world, the nearly adulterous, exhausting love with which middle-class women have come to address their babies. She is hardly the Madonna of modern painting; she is something better—a more contrary Mary, a spirited Auntie Mame (her family actually called her that), the Katharine Hepburn of American art.

of baby love as a form of romantic love.

How restless even wealthy nineteenth-century American families were. The Cassatts scooted right around Pennsylvania throughout her girlhood: she was born in Pittsburgh in 1844, but the family soon stepped across the river to Allegheny City, where old man Cassatt, a businessman, got elected mayor; they went back to Pittsburgh, moved across the state to the big city of Philadelphia, sojourned in Paris, came back to the small town of West Chester, near Philadelphia, and then settled in the swank Southward district in Philly, so that Mary could go to art school.

In 1860, Mary enrolled, with very little fanfare, in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts' "Antique Class." The academy subsequently earned a reputation as a philistine bear pit for artists; Eakins, teaching there a generation later, suffered for insisting on showing male anatomies to female students. But the position of a young woman at the academy who was in love with art seems to have been interestingly ambiguous. The girls were excluded from life-drawing classes, but their presence as aspiring artists was taken for granted. Mary seems to have always wanted to be a painter, and what is striking in her life is not that this ambition left her isolated—throughout her apprenticeship, she was surrounded by other, equally gifted young women artists, among them her friends Eliza Haldeman and Emily Sartain—but that she didn't get sidetracked. Readers of "Little Women," the best record of young womanhood in the eighteen-sixties, will recall that a career in art is all Amy March wants. Amy visits Europe, sees Raphael, and decides that "talent isn't genius, and no amount of energy can make it so"—true enough, though it hardly discouraged any of the men—and then she gets married. (In a startling spiritual coincidence, May Alcott, the original of the art-loving Amy March, eventually became one of Cassatt's closest friends.) What made Cassatt unique was her high discouragement threshold—Amy March in armor.

The path from Philadelphia to Paris was a well-travelled one at the time, and Cassatt arrived back in Paris (she had learned French during her family's earlier stay) in 1865, the year before Eakins. Once she was there, she did what artists were expected to do, which was mostly to copy paintings at the Louvre. She stayed in France for three and a half years. Her passport description—in the pre-photograph days, you had to endure a concise, even rude summary—said that she was five feet six, and had gray eyes, a big mouth and chin, a ruddy complexion, and a snub nose. Her barbed intelligence and a capacity for admiring got her into circles that were notoriously hard to crack. Mallarmé liked and respected her, and there were not many Rittenhouse Square girls who could say that. She seems to have been asexual—or, if that is a human impossibility, then to have made a decision to enter the cloister of art. Her excellent biographer, Nancy Mowll Mathews, finds a hint of a single, joking "engagement" to an old friend in the first years in Paris, and then nothing, male or female. Cassatt seems to have understood that marriage would mean the end of her career as an artist, as it sooner or later did for all the young women artists around her. (Perhaps it was her asexuality that Degas, neuter himself, was later drawn to.)

FEW art students who have been to Paris can have had a flatter homecoming. The Cassatts, continuing their Pennsylvania wanderings, had moved to Altoona, following their railroad-executive son, Alexander, and not long afterward to Hollidaysburg, a small suburb of Altoona, ninety miles east of Pittsburgh. Mary had to use a maid as a model. "I should jump at anything in preference to America," she moaned. Her two best Paris pictures, which she had sent to a Chicago dealer, burned up

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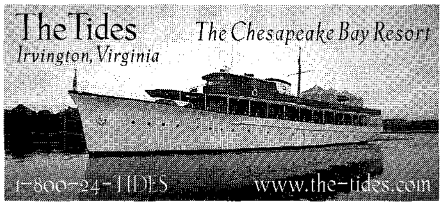

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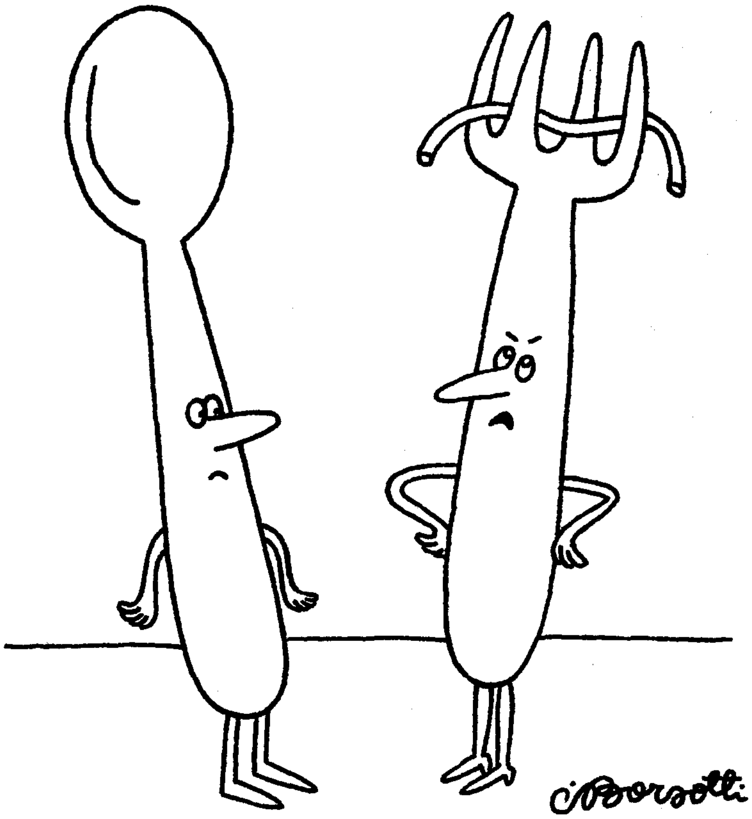

"For God's sake, how long's that been there?"

• •

in the Great Chicago Fire: even Mrs. O'Leary's cow was against her.

She got one lucky break. In 1871, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Pittsburgh decided that his new cathedral, a huge pseudo-Chartres, needed copies of two Correggios in Parma. The job bought her a ticket out; she was the one person with a brush in the neighborhood who knew what to do with it, and she had been to Europe. That December, she left for Parma with her friend Emily Sartain: she did a good job, got the picture painted. She then painted in Spain—her serious painting at the time was mostly mediocre, touristy bits of Mediterranean exotica—and went back to Paris, this time, it seems, determined never again to get pulled to Altoona.

Then, around 1875, she saw some pastels by Edgar Degas in a store window on the Boulevard Haussmann. They changed her life. The Impressionists were already well entrenched, as a *scandale*, and it was considered sensible and even stylish for middle-of-the-road expatriate artists to add a little brightly colored frosting to their pictures. But that wasn't what she wanted. She wanted in, and was let in. She made friends with Pissarro, and then became a disciple of Degas—shrewdly embracing both the left- and the right-wing pillars of the new group. She took up pastels, as Degas had done, and her oils made a terrific leap forward: "Portrait of a Lady" (her mother, actually), painted very soon after her first exposure to Degas, replaces the forced, junior-year-abroad excitement of the "Spanish" pictures with a moody and impassively unsparing modern emotional flatness. She was invited to join the avant-garde group, and she had twelve works in the fourth Impressionist exhibition, in 1879.

Advanced Parisian art circles in the nineteenth century remained closed to outsiders, and particularly to Americans. Cassatt is almost our only native artist of any talent who was allowed to enter. This was owing partly to her talent, partly to her persistence, and partly, it must be said, to the fact that the exception to the general rule of the Parisian closed circle is offered to women, and particularly to American women, who choose to marry in. Cassatt married, but she didn't marry a man. She married an Idea.

This meant giving up her American identity—the much more comfortable and familiar world of the expatriate painter. It was an emigration, not an evolution, and she did it without regret or remorse. It was a lot to give up. The life of American copyists in the Louvre—the sane, reasonable moderates—was beautifully easy. Paris in the eighteen-seventies was so interesting and so cheap that Cassatt's aging parents would soon leave their latest Pennsylvania home, on Philadelphia's Delancey Place, to move to Paris, just for the pleasure of it. But there was nothing easy about the Impressionist circle. They lived and worked and drank in the area around the Place de l'Europe and the Rue de Rome, up above the Gare Saint-Lazare—one of the few neighborhoods in Paris that had been unattractive before, were unattractive then, and remain unattractive to this day. The Impressionists were a contentious, beleaguered, censorious, grim little band. An aura of *bonheur de vivre* has clung to them, because they gave to the new facts of bourgeois pleasure the form of a permanent modern myth. But they were as crazed in their devotion to realizing their vision as monks on pillars, and, like the monks, knew no way down. What Cassatt got from them in return was seriousness, and the overwhelmingly clean feeling that comes to those who are doing good work that the world can't see, who are the secret lovers of their time.

The Irish writer George Moore, not a stupid man, once announced that Cassatt's "art was derived from Degas as Madame Morisot's art was derived from Manet." Although this "condescending cliché," as another writer calls it, has understandably made a lot of feminists mad, it is essentially true: Cassatt's style does derive from Degas's, from the striated pastels to the more basic marriage of figuration and high color. The trouble with Moore's remark, and with the tradition that deprecates Cassatt as a mere imitator, is its implied insistence that stylistic originality is the only marker of accomplishment in painting. Though Cassatt's style derived from Degas's, she did something profoundly different: turned his essentially cold, analytic, beautifully classical gaze into something engaged. She turned a dry, cold style into a dry, warm style.

It took her a while. Degas sent her out with a notebook to draw in the parks and the streets, and she seems to have done this dutifully. Then she turned the drawings into apprentice-work pictures of ladies drinking tea or gazing down from theatre loges. But the purpose of Degas's teaching was to free her eye and her hand, to shake her out of her dogmatic slumbers, and it did. In 1881, when she showed eleven pictures in the sixth Impressionist exhibition, her father wrote to her brother Alexander, "Mame's success is certainly more marked this year than at any time." But it was a success of a new, "in" group kind, he went on, saying, "Artists of talent and reputation and other persons prominent in art matters ask to be introduced to her."

BIG movements and seismic changes in art are often better in their breaking apart than in their coming together. The rock critic Giles Smith once pointed out that punk rock lasted barely long enough to vomit on its own shoes but that post-punk, which came right afterward and depended on it—Elvis Costello, Joe Jackson—changed everything, and made music. It was only with the breakup, in 1886, of the Impressionists that Cassatt found her subject and her manner. Around 1889, she began doing a lot of pictures of mothers with their children, out of excitement, it seems, in her new role as the aunt of her younger brother's children, and this became her obsessive subject for the next twenty-five years. The subject was almost too easy, and, as students of her work have pointed out, there was a general craze for pictures of mothers and children around that time. But Cassatt's images don't belong to the standard domestic, *Kinder und Kirche* family-enhancing line. Her mothers and children look like Audubon's birds and beasts—they are isolated twosomes, placed outside the usual domestic setting. They're *alone.* Even in the relatively early "Young Mother," of 1888, the kiss the mother plants on the forehead of the distracted child is tense, wound up, almost needy. It is the isolation of the mother and child that marks Cassatt's new images, and the bond that brings together mother and child seems less one of instinct than one of shared em-

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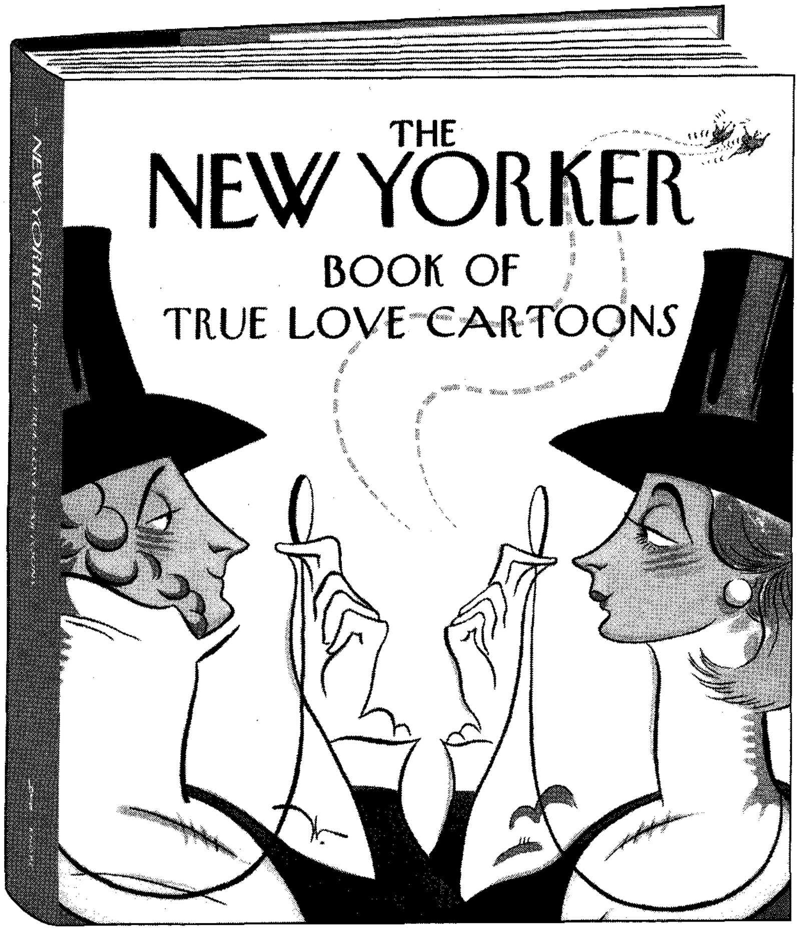
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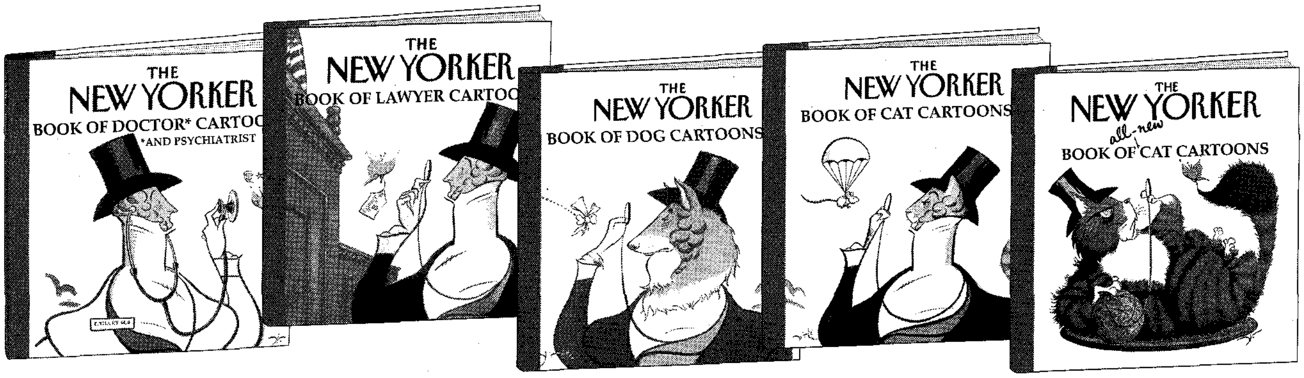
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barkation on a project: they clutch and cling and support each other like a pair of veteran apache dancers, or a knife-throwing team.

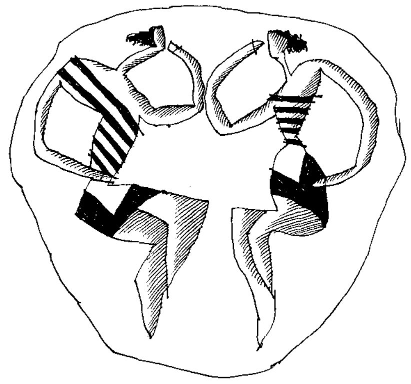
Although the long Christian tradition of Madonna-and-Child pictures might seem to offer a solid precedent for what Cassatt was trying to do, its idealizing tendency meant that making the mother and her child actually look like a mother and child was for the most part taboo—the number of convincing-looking mothers and babies in Christian painting is as small as the number of convincing-looking Crucifixions. Cassatt had the brains and the taste to see that the brief exception to this rule lay in the work of the Florentine painters of the Quattrocento. Botticelli was the holy name of the late nineteenth century, but where most of the painters of the time got the full Burne-Jones from him—the tripping, Madonna-faced maidens on point—Cassatt got the Tuscan realism that underlay it. Degas had told her to look at the hands of the Botticelli Madonnas, and not just the hands but the nails, to see how rough and peasantlike they were. From Botticelli she learned that truth was not incompatible with grace.

Not mother love but baby love became her subject. Her grasp of baby anatomy became perfect, and startling, even a little ugly, in its truth. In the pastel "Mathilde Holding a Baby Who Reaches Out to the Right," of 1889, she caught the touching discrepancy between a baby's soft, limp lower body and its hard, horizontal arms—the soft massive release downward, the nervous, angular, unarticulated stiff movement outward and upward. Cassatt saw at once the happiness of the perfect absorption of mother and child in each other, and the way that that happiness is shadowed by the facts of exhaustion and impermanence. The eyes of mother and child often don't quite meet; the mother looks down, the baby looks out. (A child held tight by its mother will almost always look away, toward the horizon: a boat in port looking for the ocean.)

An early pastel, "Mother and Child," is one of the few works of nineteenth-century art that can accurately be called radical, in the sense that there is nothing like it anywhere in earlier art. This little boy doesn't just embrace his mother. He consumes her, with a passionate hug that erases their features and turns them into a single, heart-shaped form. For the first time, baby love is declared, unsentimentally, on the basis of truthful observation, as the equal in intensity and charge of any other kind of feeling. In an unpretentious way, Cassatt's "Mother and Child" is as revolutionary an image, and violates as many taboos, as any Courbet: baby love is proclaimed as an emotion that stands on its own, outside religion or family relations, as a form of romantic love.

In 1890, Cassatt saw a show of Japanese prints at the École des Beaux Arts, and she began to make one-of-a-kind drypoint etchings. But if they are too close to pastiche to be completely satisfying as art, they are a nearly complete catalogue of mothering. She got the struggle of it, the way the child (see "The Child's Bath") is always going the other way—the muscular tension and exhaustion of wrestling with someone who has another intention.

From Cassatt's time to ours, the question remains: Does true feminism lie in the rejection of traditional women's work or in the exaltation and defense of the scorned "women's subjects"? Is the assertion of nurture, of mothering, of the "domestic" sphere implicitly more radical than entering men's worlds on men's terms? Like Jane Austen, Mame Cassatt—this stubborn, tetchy spinster—chose the woman's subject. She saw that for her friends and her sisters-in-law mothering was the most meaningful activity of their lives, though it wasn't particularly "natural," in the sense of producing poses of harmony and ease and grace. (In Cassatt's world, naturalness belongs to the other world—of entertainments, shopping, and trying on.) Cassatt's mothers, like Degas's dancers, are being asked to produce poses, in the advancement of grace, that involve a lot of dull repetition. Her children are as taking and as indifferent to their mothers as gods are to nymphs, or men to opera girls. Cassatt is, on a smaller scale of achievement, to mothering what Jane Austen is to courtship: the outside viewer who grasps clearly, as the women involved grasp only vaguely, the essential disequilibrium of the activity, the fact that the woman always gives more love than she can hope to take. You can practically hear the familiar maternal monologue running through the head of the beautiful mother—half Botticelli Madonna, half young Virginia Woolf—in what may be Cassatt's masterpiece, "Breakfast in Bed," of 1897. Her face is watchful and evaluating, her eyes hooded, running off to one side, dead even to the comforting cup of morning coffee, and the weariness is played off against the almost Michelangelesque sureness of her relaxed, confident embrace of her baby.



On the strength of a growing reputation, Cassatt was approached in 1892 by the organizers of the great Columbian Exposition in Chicago, planned for the next year, to do a large-scale mural for what was to be a "Woman's Building" there. This pavilion seems to have been a genuinely courageous project—an exhibition, undertaken entirely by women and sponsored by them, of the Newly Emancipated American Woman. Two murals were planned: one, to be undertaken by a talented, though now forgotten, American painter also resident in Paris, Mary MacMonnies, was to show oppressed "Primitive Woman"; Cassatt's mural, in an identical lunette across the great hall of the building, was to show free "Modern Woman."

Cassatt decided to take for her central subject of Modern Woman a scene of "Young Women Plucking the Fruit of Knowledge"—an allegorical number, with Gibson girls on ladders picking apples. The mural, sadly, survives only in a few color reproductions, but it does seem to have been slightly comic, looking more like the spring outing at Bryn Mawr than was Cassatt's intention. (The murals seem to have been around as late as 1911, and then were destroyed.) Neither of the murals was much good as design. Cassatt made the mistake of trying to work in depth on a large surface, with a deep-space landscape behind the fruit-picking girl-scholars, and this gave the picture what was apparently a very uneasy and amateurish "float" on the wall. MacMonnies' infinitely more conventional and decorative pseudo-Piero mural seems to have worked better. But the few good color reproductions that survive of Cassatt's mural show that at least one of the figures in her central group—a strong-jawed, forthright-eyed young woman with a basket of cherries, looking off into the distance—was a perfect image of the emancipated American woman as she still sees herself, with all Hepburn's or Amelia Earhart's poise and eagerness.

The mural project helped confirm Cassatt's reputation, which persists to this day, as top woman artist, and she made a triumphant return to America in 1898. Unfortunately, like so many artists, she hit pay dirt and quicksand at the same time: the market for her mother-and-child pictures was so large and her own nature was beginning to become so ornery that the original intensity began to bleed from them. After her American trip, the mothers and children became idly decorous—and even, in a new, stately regard for each other, sentimental. She became a mother-love factory, and her hand, never terribly skilled, began to coarsen, so that some of her last decade's pictures are—hard to believe for Degas's major acolyte—really vulgar. She had bought a handsome house fifty miles from Paris, and she lived there with a nurse companion and got crusty and colorful. Crusty people tend to be fun to read about and pretty awful to be around. People made pilgrimages to her house, and either had their heads bitten off or had their faces painted, depending on her mood. Sadly, she mocked the generations of modern picture-making that followed hers; even Matisse, whom she might have been expected to admire as a poet of private emotion, earned her contempt. She insisted that the new art was all attention-seeking, a dealer's bubble—which was, of course, exactly what had been said about the Impressionists.

She died in 1926, a year after Sargent, mourned by her nieces and nephews, and largely forgotten by the American art world. It was only with the rebirth of American feminism, in the nineteen-seventies, that her reputation once again began to rise. She had confronted the great, complicated theme that all feminists sooner or later have to confront: in plain English, what do you do about the kids? The big themes turn, as she spotted with her quick intuition, on the question of motherhood. Everything else is negotiable—middle ways can be sought, compromises made. But until the bioengineers carve out that womb in a man's tummy only women can become mothers, and every woman is faced, sooner or later, with the essential question of submitting or denying. Cassatt denied herself, and made the best and subtlest record we have of what submitting really looks like. She was the first to see that mothers with children were at once women in love and women at work, and that if their love retains some of the joy of sex their work retains all the dignity and awkwardness of labor. In 1911, she wrote to a friend, "Almost all my pictures with children have the mother holding them, would you could hear them talk, their philosophy would astonish you." It still does. ◆

THE CURRENT CINEMA

THE LAST EMPEROR

How Stanley Kubrick called the world to order.

BY ANTHONY LANE

SOUND
SCENE
TAKE
1
2
3
PROD
Etc...

It read like Agatha Christie: "The police were summoned to Mr. Kubrick's rural home in Hertfordshire, north of London, yesterday afternoon, when he was pronounced dead." Thus ran the *Times* report on Monday, March 8th, confirming that the foremost man of mystery in modern cinema—the Howard Hughes of Hertfordshire—had retained the patent on his secrecy to the end. The myth of Stanley Kubrick is now intact, unlikely to be broken, and it can only add to the agonies of expectation that will attend the delivery of "Eyes Wide Shut." Twelve years we've been waiting for a new Kubrick picture, and this psychodrama, with Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, was set for release on July 16th. One wonders whether Warner Bros., out of respect for the deceased, will now move the release date forward.

Kubrick was born on July 26, 1928, at a time when his parents were living on Clinton Avenue in the Bronx. His assiduous biographer, Vincent LoBrutto, has dug through the school records at P.S. 90 and unearthed the fact that in matters of Personality, Works and Plays Well with Others, Completes Work, Is Generally Careful, Respects Rights of Others, and Speaks Clearly the young Stanley was deemed to be unsatisfactory. It's hard to see why the principal didn't simply stick a label on his forehead saying "Is Destined to Become Movie Director" and leave it at that. In an effort to invigorate his son, the dashing Dr. Jacques Kubrick gave him a still camera and taught him to play chess—an inspired, if slightly ominous, combination. Like Nabokov, whose most infamous novel was transmuted into Kubrick's sleekest film, Kubrick would later be hailed as the grand master of aesthetic strategy—or, if you prefer, as the Bobby Fischer of cinema, the hermit wonk who used his players like pawns and trapped his harried audiences in check.

Kubrick went on to William Howard Taft High School, where he played percussion in the school orchestra and drums in the Taft Swing Band. It is a mark of the obsessive that he should never dump his interests, and Kubrick may be unique among directors in being more rapidly recognized by his choice of music than by his dialogue. Not many viewers could quote from a Kubrick script, unless you count the cry of "Here's Johnny!" from "The Shining," but pretty well everyone was swayed by his lunar

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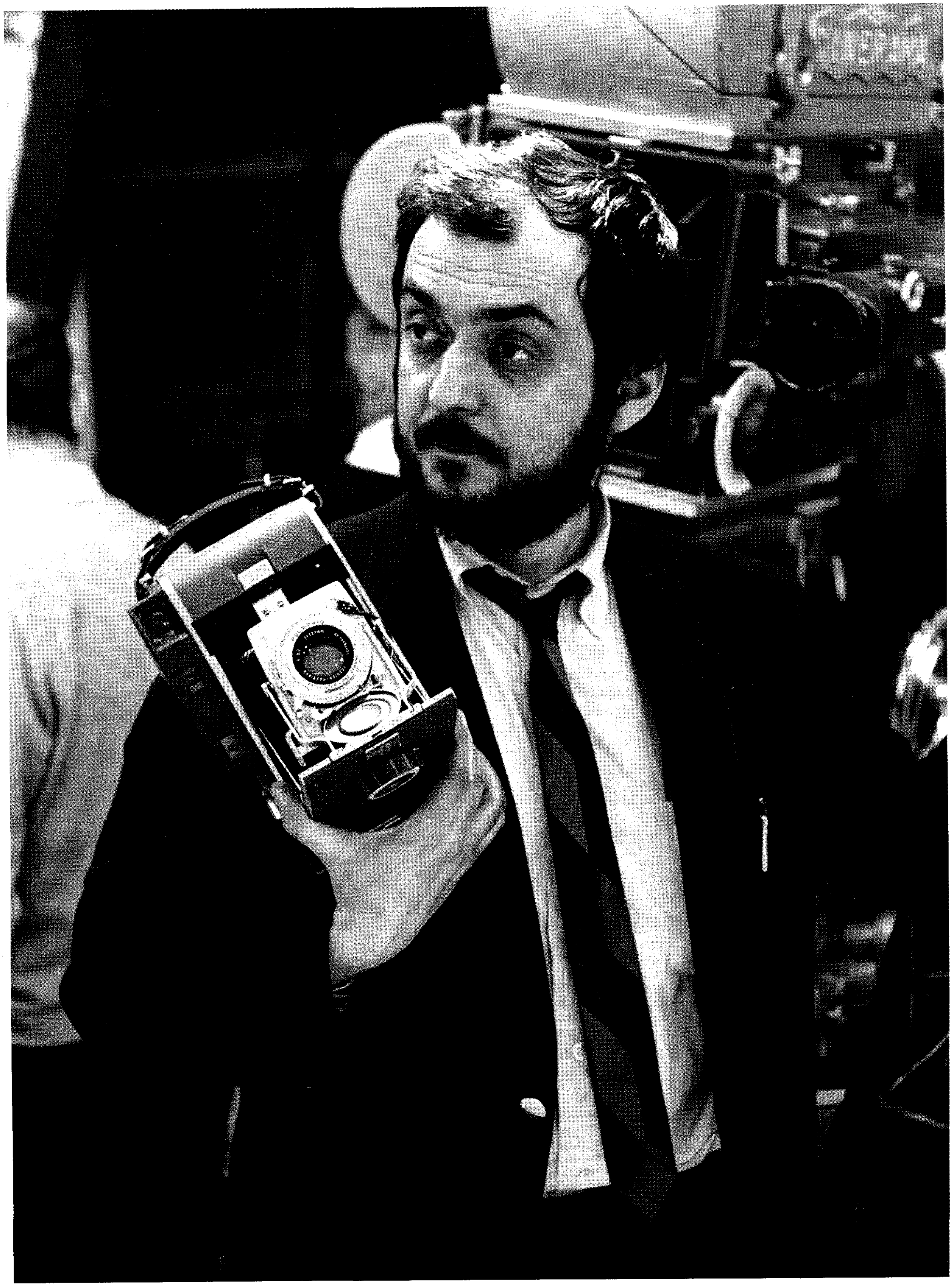


use of Strauss in "2001: A Space Odyssey." (He even played music on his sets to maintain the mood.) At sixteen, Kubrick sold a picture to *Look* for twenty-five bucks, and when he graduated the magazine took him on as a staff photographer. He moved to the Village and made "Day of the Fight," a boxing documentary about the middleweight Walter Cartier, and then, in 1953, his first feature, a wartime drama entitled "Fear and Desire." It cost a little over fifty thousand dollars, and the associate producer was Stanley's Uncle Martin.

From here on, the ascent was vertiginous: to make a movie called "Killer's Kiss" followed by one called "The Killing" argues a slight narrowness of range, but what in the dullard looks like repetition can, in the case of a nimble talent, signal the impassioned beginnings of a style. The first of these two pictures took Kubrick back into boxing, and the second was the tale of a racetrack heist; both are fatalistic yet light on their feet, and alarmingly insolent toward the demands of chronology. They are as good a way of getting into training for "Pulp Fiction" as you will ever find. If anything, Kubrick could hardly keep pace with his own tricks, and "The Killing" suffers from a hilarious voice-over: "Four days later, at seven-thirty A.M., Sherry Peatty was wide awake." Given the choice, I would take "Killer's Kiss," with its cheap, graying, dawn-and-dusk hunger for New York—all those quick loving glances at dance-hall posters and ice-cream sundaes in a window. Because Kubrick was still learning, and was hobbled by a tight budget, he couldn't help stumbling up against life; the story of his subsequent career has been the slow and maniacal banishment of that young man's riskiness, to the point where feelings, like rainfall, can be measured by the inch.

It was "Paths of Glory," in 1957, that put Kubrick on the map. Like most antiwar films, it burst awake during the war sequences themselves—Kirk Douglas as a colonel with a conscience in the French Army of 1916, leading his men from hump to shell hole for no better reason than to earn the honor of a pointless death. When three of them are court-martialled for cowardice, he defends them, in the echoing hall of a château—not the last time Kubrick would thrill to the rap of heels, or the formal maneuver of figures, in a cavernous space. Such crisp rigor of design was tensed against the liberal ambitions of the story, and that struggle makes "Paths of Glory" his most satisfying movie; as with "Lolita," there was a natural ease and density to the performances which forbade the youthful Kubrick, unlike his riper self, to treat the art of moviemaking as a scientific experiment.

The following years were a flourish: "Spartacus," "Lolita," "Dr. Strangelove," and "2001: A Space Odyssey." By the end of the sixties, many people were on their knees before the Kubrick phenomenon, or out of their heads; to me it feels as if he opened the air lock. There is something majestically unbreathable in his conception of cinema. His notorious devotion to the multiple take—actors have frequently spoken of shooting a scene thirty or forty times, and the men's last meal in "Paths of Glory" required sixty-eight roast ducks—speaks not of Flaubertian accuracy but of a furious refusal to accept that the world cannot be bent to his will. That Kubrick remained so calm and courteous on the set makes that fury all the more credible. Tony Curtis, in his autobiography, talks about a scene between Kirk Douglas and himself in "Spartacus," during which crucified bodies hung in the distance. At a given moment in the script, the body on the twentieth cross was supposed to writhe a little. When it failed to obey, Kubrick sent his assistant director to remonstrate. Back came the report: "It's a fucking dummy." Kubrick was unmoved. "Put on wires and wiggle it," he said.

The director was never content with "Spartacus," a project that he had inherited from Anthony Mann, but he got his revenge in films like "2001" and "Barry Lyndon," with their formidable blend of maximum control and—in every sense—zero gravity. He made no bones about his space odyssey. "On the deepest psychological level," he said, "the film's plot symbolized the search for God, and it finally postulates what is little less than a scientific definition of God." And there you have Stanley Kubrick. Whatever else movies do, they do not postulate definitions; if they try they die. What possible religious revelation could be vouchsafed by a movie whose only memorable character was a gay computer? At this distance, within two years of the title's prediction, "2001" looks dated and bloated; watching the flight attendants on the moon shuttle, I only wish that Kubrick had had the courage to call it "1968: A Bad Year for Hats." Even "Dr. Strangelove," that most brilliant of black jokes, seems stranded these days. The test of satire is that it outlive the conditions that bred the original outrage, but Kubrick's satire was seldom more than high-flown sarcasm, and his Cold War complaint feels closer to Ionesco than to Swift; the news that nuclear weapons could be bad for your health was hardly radical, but no one can forget the absurdist rattle of cartoon men in their subterranean tombs.

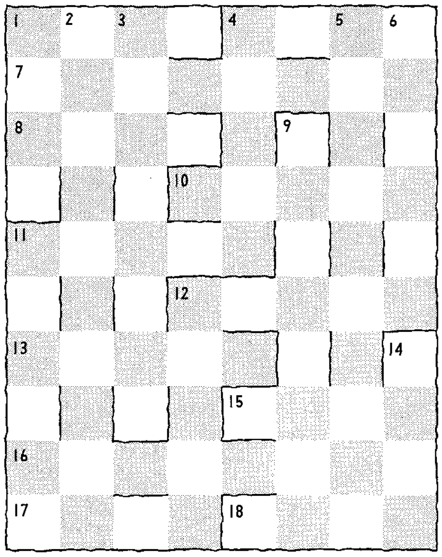
That film suggested a fascinating flaw: it was, if anything, twice as paranoid as the establishment that it chose to lampoon. Twenty-three years later, "Full Metal Jacket" hit the same vein; what made it so repellent was the viewer's battered suspicion that the savagery of the movie was itself more insidious than a boot camp. Kubrick is proof that, while films appear to offer divine opportunities of order, they can also run monstrously amok. Is there a worse great movie than "A Clockwork Orange" in existence? It asked, at brain-freezing length, whether the cure for criminal tendencies might be harsher than the crime, but the more pressing issue was whether the film should be considered guilty of a similar excess. This is not a question of screen violence, most of which is over and done within the first half hour, to be replaced by interminable talk; it is a matter of Kubrick's antiseptic vision—of a world whose immaculate rooms stretch out to the embrace of a greedy, wide-angle lens, and where the beating of a tramp takes place in a tunnel as clean as a spaceship. "It's funny how the colors of the real world only seem really real when you viddy them on a screen," the delinquent hero says, and you wonder which reality Kubrick himself would favor. When rape turns into a dance, is that a valuable social comment or the showpiece of a cold choreographer?

It is only fair to recall the millions who thrilled to Kubrick—who saw courage in that moral ambivalence, and found in his misanthropy a welcome counterblast to the warm fuzz of Hollywood. There is no denying the breadth and thrust of his technique; if "The Shining" seemed like his most beautifully achieved work of the last twenty years, that is because the newfangled Steadicam was not the toy of a nerd but a genuine aid to prowling emotional inquiry—both curiosity and cat. Whether the film is scary, as opposed to doomy and unsettling, is open to debate; one problem with redefining horror, or any other genre, is that you can arrive at your destination and realize that you forgot to pack the horror. Such was Kubrick's genius, and also the source of his emptiness: he wanted to make everything new—the plushest costume drama ever, the most baroque science fiction, the war to end all wars—but, for all his erudition, he rarely paused to ponder what might lie in the bedrock of the old, or the ordinary, or the much loved.

That is purely an artistic shortfall. As a husband, father, and friend, Kubrick was by all accounts good and generous company—"a great beard-scratcher," according to his colleague Saul Bass. I am not sure that Kubrick was well served by the legends that accrued to him like coral: according to LoBrutto, the director of "Full Metal Jacket" had three hundred palm trees photographed in Spain so that the ones he liked could be uprooted and shipped to the East End. But his desolate Vietnam still smelled of London; and how could such a perfectionist bear to shoot "Lolita"—that love letter to America, a road movie waiting to happen—in the shires of England? Authenticity is by no means an automatic virtue; it can sometimes reek of panic—of a half-confession that the truth, far from being companionably to hand (as it seems to be for Jean Renoir or Howard Hawks), may already be slipping through your grasp. If Kubrick had acknowledged that elusiveness, his films might have been funnier; instead, you can feel snowbound by his lack of humor, like Jack Nicholson frosted into the Overlook Hotel with his own cracked mind to keep him company. Still, no pro can be expected to turn amateur again, and we should honor and remember Kubrick for having followed his fanatical instincts to the limit, where no man had gone before. His grand dream was to make a film about Napoleon, and both he and his admirers were crestfallen that it never came about. Watching the body of his work again, however, and cowering with awe at those stately, imperial tracking shots, I think it safe to say that Stanley Kubrick did Napoleon proud after all. ♦

8 x 10 CRYPTIC

NO. 81 BY MONIKA ZOOK



ACROSS

1 Fashion magazine with Spanish and French articles (4)
4 Robe from past time making a comeback (4)
7 Tip for sweetheart having jeans trimmed (4,4)
8 Spotted nightgown's front cut (4)
10 Female with shiny fabric in brilliant color (5)
11 Providers of down, e.g., see changes (5)
12 Penny isn't for cosmetics (5)
13 Décor for the neck of a Glaswegian, perhaps (5)
15 Coat tailored for an old Roman (4)
16 Style I pleated with a showy crest (8)
17 Endless rush for a cowboy accessory (4)
18 Yield some nice designs (4)

DOWN

1 Model's agency includes Schiaparelli (4)
2 Large diapers he fashioned with guidance (10)
3 British author and architect dressed in fine material (8)
4 Sheer fabric almost worked (5)
5 Developed great denim in a haphazard way (10)
6 Spilled tears about red collar (6)
9 I'm back in woolly coat with plastic (8)
11 Understands Republican is wearing pants (6)
12 Ring's held by each photographer's subject (5)
14 Announced cut in style (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 80 appears on page 111. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.

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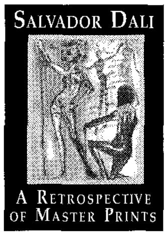

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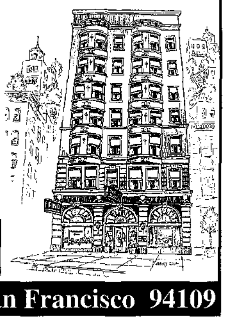

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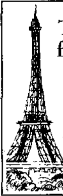
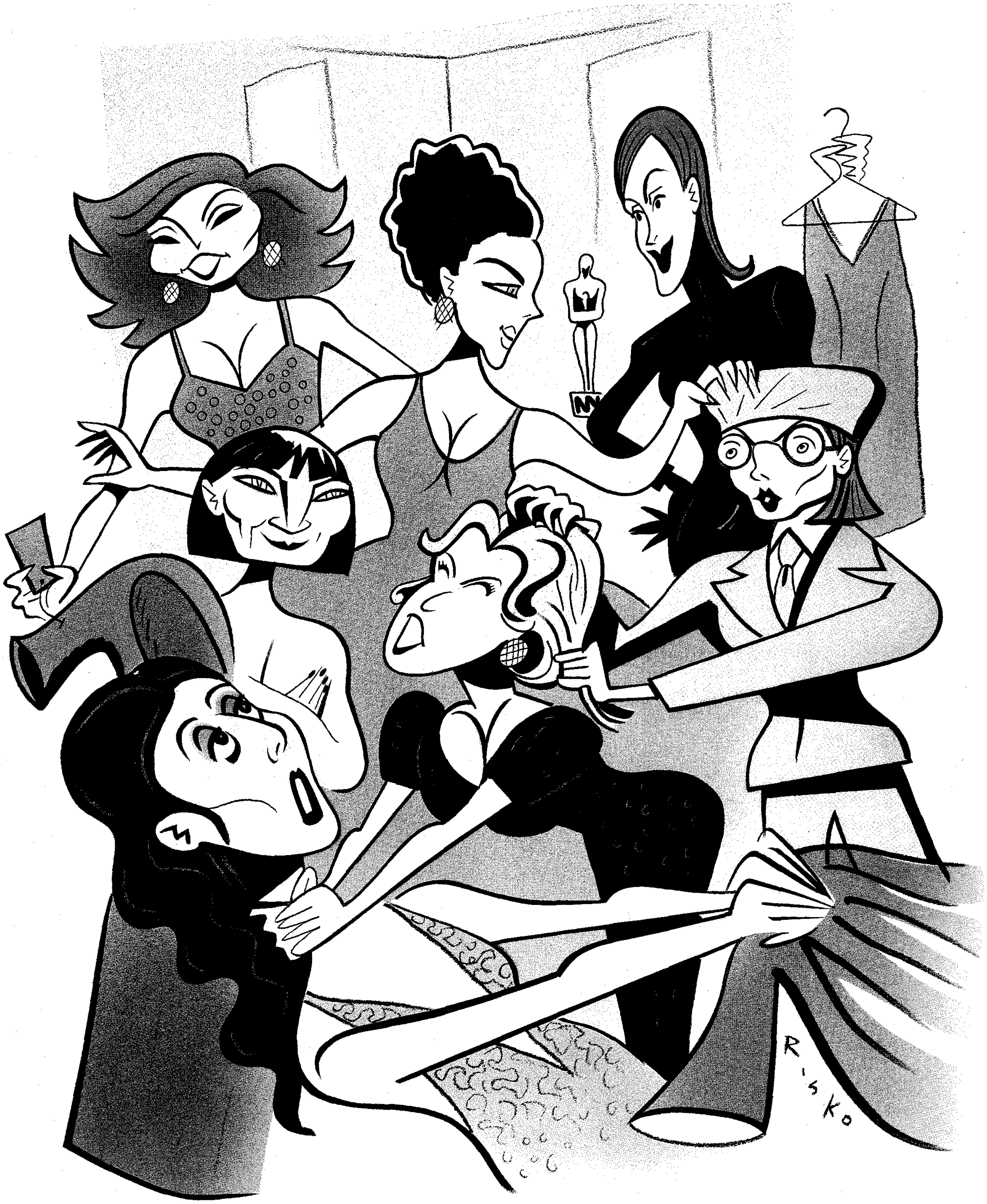
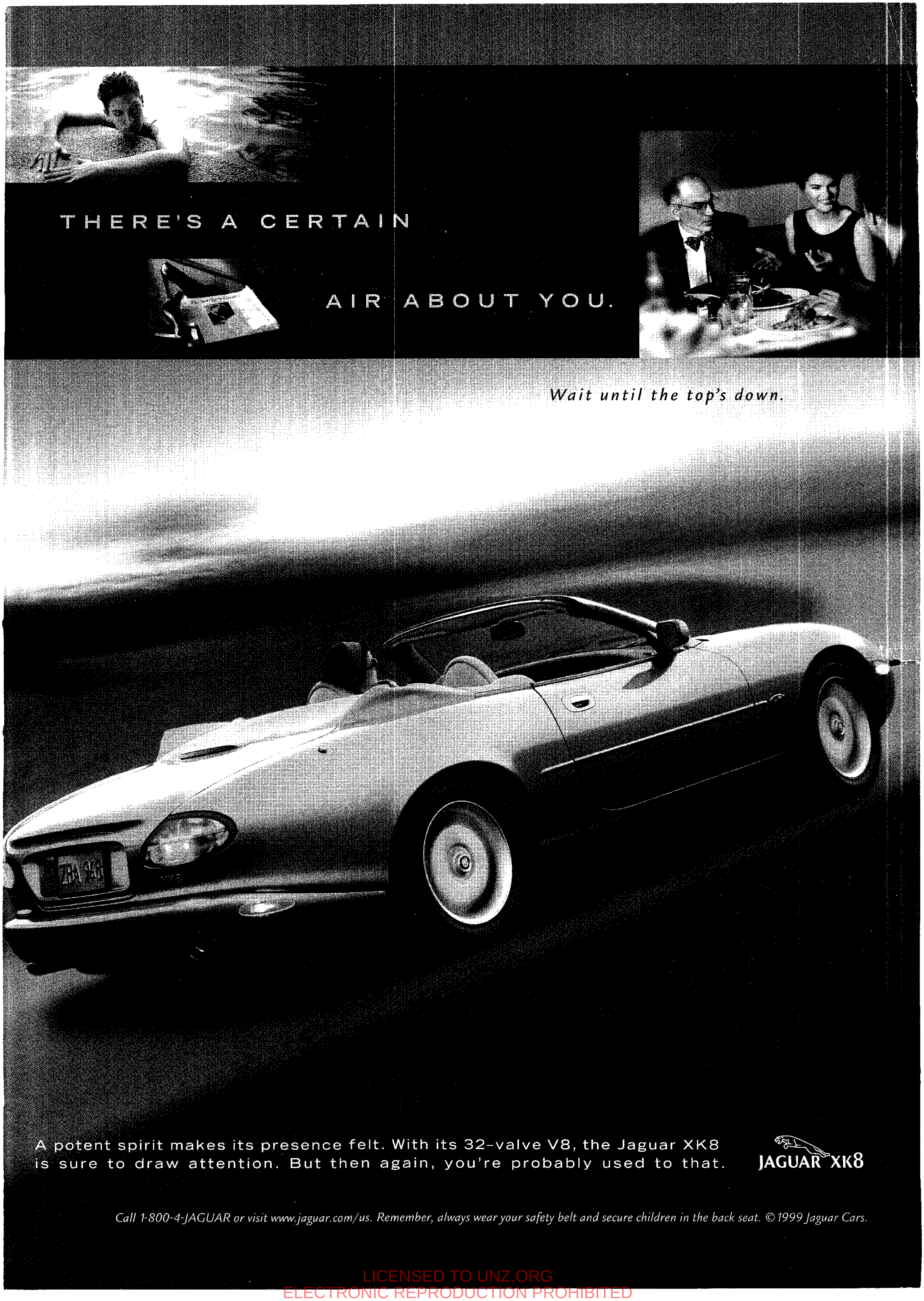


THE BACK PAGE BY ROBERT RISKO

OSCAR'S GREENROOM



On March 18th, Christie's International will auction fifty-four gowns and get-ups seen at the Academy Awards over the past forty years. The sale includes ensembles worn by (clockwise from left) Raquel Welch, Elizabeth Taylor, Julia Roberts, Diane Keaton, Bette Midler, Cher, and Anjelica Huston. Proceeds will benefit the American Foundation for AIDS *Research.*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